

**OYSTER TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY
January 29, 2009**

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Moderator, **Steve VanderKooy** called the conference call to order at 9:08 a.m. The following members and were in attendance:

Members

Brian Lezina, LDWF, Lacombe, LA
Cherie O'Brien, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Mark Berrigan, FDACS, Tallahassee, FL
Bill Arnold, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Bradley Randall, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Priscilla Weeks, Houston Advanced Research Center, Woodlands, TX
John Supan, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
Robert Goodrich, TPWD, Austin, TX

Staff

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

VanderKooy announced that **Mark Van Hoose** is retiring at the end of January and does not know if and when he will be replaced.

This is our first GoToMeeting web conferencing and conference call combination to review Lance Robinson's **Section 3.0 Description of Stock Comprising the Management Unit (MU)**.

- **Robinson** stated that he has gotten a few comments and incorporated several of them in his latest updated section. Several TTF members indicated that in some sections there is some redundancy.
- **Robinson** questioned keeping the list of regional and marketing names used for eastern oysters. **Goodrich** stated that from a Law Enforcement perspective this list is very valuable to them even though this list changes frequently he suggests keeping this table. TTF members are encouraged to send **Robinson** any local names to be included in this section. **Berrigan** was opposed to putting the regional and marketing names in this section, but agreed on putting the list in the marketing section.
- Section 3.2.2.2 - Setting and Growth questions were raised on salinity, this is also covered in **O'Brien's** section which is more updated.
- American oyster was changed throughout the document to eastern oyster where appropriate.
- Oyster TTF members discussed the spawning section where the size is discussed.

- TTF members discussed the reorganization of Section 3 and the life cycle figure was moved to the life history section for more continuity.
- Under the Juveniles section TTF members spent some time discussing the use of the words juvenile, spat and seed oysters (a management term) and if they are interchangeable. These definitions will need to be included in the back of the FMP.
- The Adults section was rearranged and the definitions were expanded upon.
- The Geographic range and distribution and abundance of stocks were combined and titled: Geographic range and Distribution of Genetic Stocks.
- The Spawning section was rearranged and reworded.
- More current references are needed throughout this section. **Arnold** suggested that there are reviews on distribution by North in Chesapeake and Kim in Mobile Bay.

The next GoToMeeting web conferencing and conference call will be Wednesday, February 18, 2009 and C. O'Brien's section 4.0 on Habitat will be covered.

The call ended at 11:10 a.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**OYSTER TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY
February 18, 2009**

Moderator, **Steve VanderKooy** called the conference call to order at 1:30 p.m. The following members and were in attendance:

Members

Brian Lezina, LDWF, Lacombe, LA
Cherie O'Brien, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Mark Berrigan, FDACS, Tallahassee, FL
Bill Arnold, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Bradley Randall, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Patrick Banks, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Staff

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

Others

Richard Fulford, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS

This is our second GoToMeeting web conferencing and conference call combination to review **Cherie O'Brien's Section 4.0 Description of the Habitat of the Stock(s) Comprising the Management Unit.**

First up for discussion was the possibility of doing a stock assessment on oysters, invited to attend this portion of the conference call were **Patrick Banks** from LDWF and **Dr. Richard Fulford** of GCRL. **Dr. Fulford** stated that biomass data and harvest data would be needed for catch survey method also called the Collie-Sissenwine method. Louisiana reported that they have size class data (spat, seed and sack) available, spanning 20-40 years. Texas reported that they have size class data similar to Louisiana. Florida has size distribution data going back 20 years, but they do not have accurate counts on mortality or landings. Mississippi's historic data prior to 2005, was lost in Hurricane Katrina and they only have post Katrina history. It is unknown what data Alabama has. **Banks** should be able to get the raw data to Dr. Fulford in a couple of weeks and **Dr. Fulford** stated he will need a couple of weeks to process the data.

Habitat Section review:

- **VanderKooy** explained that 4.1 to 4.4 is boilerplate from previous FMPs and is obviously somewhat dated. If any state reps have more current information to replace or add to the overviews of their state, they should provide them to **O'Brien**.
- The state Oyster Reef tables were reviewed. LA is in the process of reviewing and updating their table to match the other states. MS reported that their table is complete as

is with a few minor edits. FL reported they have updated information and will resend it to **O'Brien**. Texas needs to verify a couple things in order to complete their table.

It is imperative that TTF Members read each other sections and forward comments to author before these conference calls. These calls are designed to ask questions and make comments on the content of the document. Minor editorial word-smithing can be done when the sections are more complete. Please provide your written comments and edits to O'Brien directly so she can get the section ready for a final edit ASAP. If you haven't read the section completely, please do so and provide her your comments and any additional information that she may need. Comments and help with the habitat section have been requested by **O'Brien** since December 2006.

VanderKooy will contact TTF members to determine the next section ready for review and schedule the next GoToMeeting web conferencing and conference call.

The call ended at 3:45 p.m.

**TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES 59th Annual Spring Meeting
Monday, March 16, 2009
New Orleans, Louisiana**

APPROVED BY:
T. Wagner
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman **T. Wagner** called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. with the following in attendance:

Members

Chris Denson, ADMR, Dauphin Island, AL
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
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Jill Jenson, NMFS, New Orleans, LA
Rusty Gaudé, LA Sea Grant, Belle Chasse, LA
Kevin Anson, ADMR, Dauphin Island, AL
Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Teri Freitas, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, Sport Fish and Aquatic Invasive Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

The NOAA sea turtle observer program was added to the agenda as a floating item. **H. Perry moved to accept the agenda with changes and the motion was seconded by A. McMillen-Jackson.**

Approval of Minutes

T. Wagner made corrections to the TX landings. **H. Perry moved to accept minutes with changes and the motion was seconded by V. Guillory.**

Louisiana Blue Crab Industry MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) Certification

V. Guillory reported that becoming MSC Certified is a long and an extremely costly process and that Louisiana had a pre-assessment done to see if the blue crab fishery can be certified. The reviewers identified a couple of issues during their pre-assessment 1) there is no formal stock assessment for crabs, therefore no threshold, and 2) the bycatch of diamond back terrapins not

having been sufficiently dealt with. In 2011, major companies like Wal-Mart and McDonalds will be requiring MSC certification. The subcommittee discussed inviting Gary Bauer of Lake Pontchartrain Blue Crab Inc. or a member of MSC to present at the next meeting to discuss the certification.

State Status on EDRP

Florida – V. Vail reported that Florida did not receive any EDRP funds for blue crabs.

Alabama – C. Denson reported that Alabama had 87 trip ticket participants in EDRP I and 99 participants in EDRP II.

Mississippi – H. Perry reported that DMR crab fishermen were compensated for providing trip information through EDRP. The harvest monitoring tickets were submitted by fishermen for segments from 2006-2008. During that time, crab fishermen received \$863,480 for 5,243 trip tickets and \$358,930 for 12,224 derelict traps removed and recycled. That concluded the commercial crab portion of the EDRP program, with the exception of the on-going GCRL observer study with fishermen addressing effort.

Louisiana – V. Guillory reported that the marine debris removal program had some money left over and Louisiana had hoped that they would be able to use some of those funds for derelict trap removal.

Texas – T. Wagner reported that he was not aware of any specific ERDP funds for blue crabs. Most of Texas EDRP monies were going to oyster reefs and damage to bottoms.

Status of Crab Aquaculture in Mississippi

H. Perry reported that they were able to stock two ponds in 2008, one early summer and one in late fall. They will harvest in mid April; they were hoping they would be ready for use as live bait for the Cobia Shootout, but they are too small due to the cold winter. The biggest problem has been harvesting the peelers from the ponds. GCRL was able to send **A. McMillen-Jackson** about 80 known age crabs for the Florida lipofuscin work.

Florida Update on Lipofuscin

A. McMillen-Jackson gave a PowerPoint presentation on the blue crab aging using the biochemical analysis of Lipofuscin. The importance of age determination: the data can be used as a stock assessment tool to manage the blue crab fishery; the biological characteristics of the species (animal size and growth) as well as individual cohorts; it is a good estimate of whether the fishery is overfished; assumptions provide inaccurate assessments; and there is a lack of data age structures and maximum age for blue crabs. The difficulties in ageing blue crabs are they display discrete growth through ecdysis as opposed to continuous growth; they show variable size at same age; after terminal molt females do not continue to grow as measured in carapace width; and Florida has year round growth seasons affecting the ability to distinguish between cohorts. Lipofuscin is a fluorescent pigment and stable byproduct of metabolism that

accumulates over time in neural tissues and can be quantified using biochemical methods developed in Rodger Harvey's lab. Protocol: the external eyestalk is dissected; lipofuscin is extracted from tissue; fluorescence of lipofuscin is measured and quantified; protein content of sample is measured to standardize the samples; and then the lipofuscin index can then be calculated. Lipofuscin indices will be compared to a calibration curve of known age crabs; crabs will be hatched and pond raised at the SERF hatchery; sampled monthly for growth analysis and quarterly for age analysis. Mississippi hatched blue crabs are of the same cohort (hatched from same brood) and the exact same age and they are sampled again at 12 and 15 months. **H. Perry** asked about resubmitting the ageing proposal to MARFIN or another agency for funding of this project.

Florida Blue Crab Fishery & New Effort Management Program

A. McMillen-Jackson gave a PowerPoint Presentation on the effort management program in the Florida blue crab fishery. Prior to the program, the regulations placed no limits on number of fishermen in the fishery, no limits on the number of traps used by fishermen, and no real restrictions on who could harvest hard-shell, peeler, or soft-shell crabs. Under the effort management program, the FWC attempted to separate the peeler/soft-shell fishery from hard-shell fishery, cap the number of participants (endorsements), apply qualifying criteria, and establish a maximum number of traps per endorsement. The new regulations established a requirement for individual trap tags and allow the transfer (sale) of endorsements. The problem prior to the effort reduction was there was a high amount of latent effort which led to difficulties in anticipating annual effort. The department initiated the program in 1998 with a moratorium on new blue crab endorsements and held public workshops in 2002 for fishermen comments and the state's Blue Crab Advisory Board reviewed the comments in 2003. In 2005, the FWC approved the program and it began in 2007, with no fees and began charging fees in 2008.

Prior to the program implementation, the FWC estimated the total number of traps in fishery to be around 270,000 to 280,000 using a mail survey of all license holders, including the latent fishermen. After the program was fully implemented, a total of 721,800 trap tags were actually available to the participants, but only 262,263 or 36% of the available trap tags had been ordered as of September 2008. The advantages of the program is that there is a greatly reduced latent effort which promises better estimates of the potential effort and a decreased pressure on crabs during good years, better estimates of actual effort. Finally, the fishermen are experiencing increased CPUE, which leads to better profit as well as improved data fishery managers to use in stock assessments and to better management decisions.

NOAA Sea Turtle Observer Program

S. VanderKooy reported that Traci Floyd received a formal letter from David M. Bernhart at the NOAA Office of Protected Resources on February 24, 2009. The letter was asking the state representatives to recommend fisheries within their states that might be considered for placement of a Proposed List of Fisheries for gear interactions with sea turtles, similar to the list for Marine Mammals. Alabama had received the same letter and has already provided their suggestions to NOAA. The question that the Subcommittee had was regarding which other Gulf States had been sent a similar request. Since none of the other members knew anything about it, **S.**

VanderKooy agreed to follow-up with David Bernhart to determine who else was contributing information to the 'list' and he will keep the Subcommittee informed.

Derelict Trap Cleanups

Louisiana – **V. Guillory** reported that last year they only had three participants. This year they will be doing a Departmental trap clean up in the central part of the state, mostly along the shoreline. Next year (2010) they may hire a contractor to do the program. **S. VanderKooy** suggested getting a corporate sponsor like Wal-Mart since they are going green.

Mississippi – **H. Perry** gave the Mississippi report. They will not have a closed season for derelict crab traps removal in 2009. MDMR/GCRL staff will be using this time to assess clean up efforts to date. While monitoring, agency staff has collected and recycled 373 pots in late 2008 and early 2009. These efforts will continue through March 31. To date, over 17,000 derelict crab traps have been removed and recycled from Mississippi waters.

Alabama – **C. Denson** reported that they conducted a derelict crab trap removal program on March 1, 2008 and a total of 356 traps were removed from Alabama waters. AMRD has no plans to conduct a removal program in 2009.

Florida – **A. McMillen-Jackson** reported that the FWC Blue Crab Advisory Board (BCAB), after public input at workshops, revised the plan to define six regions. The closures will be up to ten days for each region, but may be shorter in the future if less time is deemed necessary. The FWC approved the closure plan at their February meeting and the rule takes effect July 1, 2009.

Texas – **T. Wagner** reported that the eighth annual closed trap season was February 20-March 1, 2009 and the number of traps removed was 1,927, removed by 151 volunteers, using 46 vessels. 54% were from San Antonio Bay system and 23% were from the Galveston Bay system. To date, 25,974 traps have been removed from Texas waters since 2002. A pre-closure publicity article was in the February 2009 issue of the Texas Saltwater Fishing Magazine; a presentation was done at the 2008 Southeastern meeting; and a poster display was at the Rockport Marine Lab aquarium.

State Reports

Florida – **A. McMillen-Jackson** reported that the 2008 landings are preliminary, but they are way down due to the drought. The Atlantic landings exceeded Gulf landings by 17%. Florida is still under drought conditions, which generally results in decreased blue crab landings.

Alabama – **C. Denson** reported that landings are down and price is up. Landings have dropped from 2.5 million in 2007 to 1.6 million in 2008. Like Florida, Alabama contributes the decline in landings due to the drought.

Mississippi – **H. Perry** provided an overview of the data runs being conducted by a USM graduate student. Guirremo Sanchez was been examining the trends and variability in the fishery-independent data provided by all the states. The abundances from recruitment to adult

were examined and summarized. Sanchez used the Louisiana data and provided several figures, showing changes in the abundance of juvenile crabs related to recent and historical climatic regimes. Periods characterized by low river discharge, elevated salinities, and low frequency of winds from the southeast were associated with low abundance of juvenile crabs. The annual fluctuations in the various weather oscillations drive around 25% of the variability over the last 50 years.

H. Perry also provided the annual overview for Mississippi. The commercial landings for 2008 were 450,188 lbs. with a total value of \$447,211, which is down considerably from 2007 which was 737,442 lbs. at a value of \$741,136. Resident commercial licenses are up from 138 to 155. However, these numbers continue to lag behind pre-Katrina levels when there were 262 resident commercial crabbers. Non-resident numbers are up with 22 licenses, compared to 7 in 2008, but still below pre-Katrina levels. Recreational licenses were down with 558 in 2008 and 510 in 2009. Crab trawl licenses are up from 53 in 2008 to 64 in 2009.

Louisiana – V. Guillory reported that Louisiana landings were down slightly in 2008 from 2007. CPUE has not had any long term trend, although there was a peak in the early 1990s but the last 20 years have remained relatively unchanged. Louisiana found a similar situation to Florida with a high level of latency on the existing commercial crab endorsements. This is evident from the trip ticket data which indicates that, on average, there are about half of the 3000+ licenses which have not landed crabs in the 9 years of the trip ticket program. Fishing effort, as measured by reported trips and reporting fishermen, has been declining since 1999 although the per/fishermen CPUE has been steady and slightly increasing.

Texas – T. Wagner reported preliminary the hard crab landings at 2.6 million with an ex-vessel value of \$2.3 million for 2008. These represent a decline of 25% and 17% in landings and value. Despite the cycles of landings peaks/valleys every 4-6 years, the long-term trend remains downward. This decline is influenced in part by the fact that fishing effort has declined 28% from 1999-2008. More accurate effort data should be available from landings now being reported through the trip ticket system. Texas now has two full years of mandatory trip ticket data (2007-2008); 2006 trip ticket data were only mandatory from Oct-Dec. of that year. Data management is in the process of looking at these data and we should have a preliminary summary by the fall 2009 meeting. Fishery-independent monitoring trends generally increased from 2007-2008 with an increased in annual bag seine seasonal young-of-the-year, annual bay trawl and Gulf trawl, and spring gill net CPUE values. Fall gill net CPUE was the only gear to show a decline from 2007-2008. Long-term trends in all gears are down throughout the time series. The ninth round of the Texas Commercial Crab Fisherman's License Buyback Program concluded last December; 13 applications were received, and a total of 5 licensed were retired, for a total purchase price of \$35,200. Bids paid ranged from \$7,000 to \$7,200 with an average paid of \$7,200. No regulatory changes for the blue crab fishery were proposed the upcoming year.

Gulf Stock Assessment Data Set Progress

B. Pellegrin reported that there is no new update because has not had the time to work on this and suggested that getting some others involved like Mike Murphy from Florida and Dr. Richard

Fulford from GCRL. **B. Pellegrin** suggested using the Louisiana data and with the Collie-Sissenwine method. **S. VanderKooy** offered to setup a conference call or webinar to get all the parties together; **B. Pellegrin** suggested setting up a call up in April.

Adjourn

A. McMillen-Jackson made the motion to adjourn and **H. Perry** seconded the motion. With no other business the meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

TCC SEAMAP Subcommittee Meeting
MINUTES
New Orleans, LA
March 16, 2009

APPROVED BY: 
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Call to Order

Chairman **J. Hanifen** called the meeting to order at 12:58 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members:

Jim Hanifen, *Chairman*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Gilmore "Butch" Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Bob McMichael, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Read Hendon, USM/~~CMS~~GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX

Others:

Karen Mitchell, *SEAMAP Technical Monitor*, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Richard Waller, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, Omega Protein Corporation, High Springs, FL
Joseph W. Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Logan Respass, Texas Sea Grant College Program, College Station, TX
Bill Kiene, NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries, Galveston, TX
Robert Fritchey, National Fisherman, New Orleans, LA
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Vicki Swann, TPWD, Austin, TX
Schuyler Dartez, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Myron Fisher, Grand Isle, LA
Suzy ~~Delaine~~ ^{Delaine}, Grand Isle, LA
Robert Boothe, Grand Isle, LA
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Bonnie Ponwith, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Roy Crabtree, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Randy Gaudé, LA Sea Grant College Program, Belle Chase, LA
Ed Sapp, GMFMC, New Orleans, LA
Ed Swindell, Menhaden Advisory Council, Hammond, LA
Jill Jensen, NMFS, New Orleans, LA

Staff:

Larry B. Simpson, *Executive Director*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, *Assistant Director*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, *SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Cheryl Noble, *Staff Assistant*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, *RecFIN Programmer/Analyst*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Rusty

LDWF

Donna Bellais, *ComFIN Survey Coordinator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Lloyd Kirk, *SEAMAP Database Programmer*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

J. Rester will discuss the October meeting under "Other Business." R. Hendon moved to accept the agenda with this addition. B. McMichael seconded and the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

R. Hendon moved to approve the October 13, 2008 minutes as submitted. B. McMichael seconded and the motion passed.

J. Hanifen recognized R. Hendon as the new Mississippi representative and thanked R. Waller for his many years of service.

Administrative Report

J. Rester reported the 2009 budget was passed but he does not know what the final figure will be for SEAMAP. The House budget passed with SEAMAP funded at \$5.098 million. **E. Roche** said it will probably be another month before they know the exact figure and a couple more months after that before the funds are actually received.

J. Rester asked again that all cruise reports for SEAMAP related surveys be submitted within 60 days after the survey's completion. He reported he has not received all reports from the Fall Shrimp/Groundfish survey. He reiterated he would like to receive notice a week prior to any sampling/surveys. The Marine Directory was published in February, and the Joint Annual Report and the 2002 Atlas were distributed in January.

J. Rester said the trawl surveys will start soon and he asked everyone to make sure their TED exemption letters are current. **K. Mitchell** said the TED exemption and other protected species permits are a NOAA-wide initiative. She will send a bulleted list of information needed from the states and asked the Subcommittee to complete and return to her ASAP. The exemption is for the incidental take of a turtle, it will not allow the states to handle the turtle, but to catch then release. She said if they want to handle, tag and release the turtle they would have to apply for a Section 10 A1A permit which takes months or even years to obtain. **K. Mitchell** said other permits are needed besides this one and from what she understands not many of the states have all of the appropriate permits. **K. Donnelly** is working on obtaining the permits for SEAMAP and making the permits program-wide. **J. Rester** stated GCRL has been trying to obtain these permits for 15-18 months and he asked what can be done to speed up this process. After discussion, **R. Hendon moved to ask the Commission to send a letter to the appropriate person within NMFS requesting expedited reviewing and processing of all SEAMAP participants' TED exemption letters and turtle interaction letters. J. Mareska seconded and the motion passed.**

Possible Options for Online Access to SEAMAP Data

J. Rester introduced Lloyd Kirk who was hired in August 2008 as the new SEAMAP Database Manager. **L. Kirk** reported that he has been asked to give the Subcommittee options for public access to SEAMAP data online. He said the first thing he must do is to determine who will be using

the data and for what purpose. He has broken that down into two categories, the general public that would just want to see where fish are caught and the researcher. He said he would give the researchers Oracle Discoverer access which would provide powerful querying ability and the general public would have a "pretty" user interface which would be easy to use. The researcher would also need to download their results which would be in CSV, XLS downloadable file formats. He asked the Subcommittee if this is what they are looking for. He showed several examples of query results and said other end results could be available too. He just needs to know what the Subcommittee wants him to do. **L. Kirk** suggested polling users and others from the web site asking what they would like to have available and in what visual formats. **J. Hanifen** said there was a history of requested data and **L. Kirk** said most requests were for entire datasets.

J. Hanifen said Louisiana is revamping their data management system and they subscribed to "Survey Monkey" to get input from users. He suggested SEAMAP subscribe to this and the Subcommittee agreed this would be a start. **J. Rester** stated that he would prepare a survey for distribution to the Councils, Marine Directory listing, constituent groups, academia, all past users and anyone else that would be interested in SEAMAP data.

SEAMAP Data Management Report

L. Kirk reported on the current status of the SEAMAP data through March 2009. He said data through 2007 are completely loaded. There were 16 surveys in 2007; 12 surveys in 2008; and 1 survey in 2009. A total of 399 surveys comprised of 693 cruises have been loaded from 1982-2009. He said he has changed the validation process somewhat so the validation of imported data is constantly improving. He developed software to import data from the SDES output directly to ORACLE and MySQL removing dependency on Clipper which is no longer being used. When the data comes in he runs it through several validation processes but he does not know if the data is correct or not, but he can determine if something is missing or not in the normal range. He said an Oracle RAC system has been implemented and this increases the performance and reliability of the database. He is working on the Internet access to the data and said the data has to be accessible in a method that does not compromise the integrity of the database.

He said there are some problems. He receives the states' data in non-standard format. He said that currently the data received from the different states are in three different formats. The SDES program in FISCUS is very useful but different versions are being used. There are several versions of the SDES program and when it is updated and he is not aware of the updates, the importation process will fail. Also, every time there is a change to what is collected and he is not made aware of the changes, the entire importation could fail and the validation of that data fails. He said he realizes not everyone will use the exact format but it is a key problem. The different versions of SDES have different database structure files. They either have nonexistent fields or a tremendous amount of data has been added. An example of this is the CTD data. According to the documentation he has, the CTD data has surface, midwater and bottom values. He then received a data set that had over 50,000 CTD data points. He agrees that SEAMAP should collect as much data as possible but the documentation needs to be brought current. It would be helpful if everyone collected the same data. **L. Kirk** then asked the Subcommittee if all the CTD data collected should be made available or just the three values in the SEAMAP protocol. The Subcommittee will ask the Environmental Data Work group to review this and any other issues that should be updated for data collection. They will

also ask the work group to revise the protocols and those will be incorporated in to the SEAMAP Operations Manual. The Subcommittee then decided to have all the work groups meet to discuss automating fields while entering data and updating all protocols.

Review of Trawl Work Group Meeting

J. Rester stated the work group met and made the recommendation that all SEAMAP tows be pulled for 30 minutes. He stated B. Pellegrin can answer any questions relating to this.

Standard SEAMAP 30 Minute Tow Time Recommendation

B. McMichael moved to change SEAMAP tows to 30 minutes in duration. B. Pellegrin said there were other suggestions made by the work group other than the tow time change. NMFS is going to completely randomized survey designs. The stations will be proportionally allocated by surface area which will cover the concerns on depth considerations, geographical areas, spatial considerations, day/night trawling, etc. After extensive discussion, the Subcommittee decided they should have an external review on comparability between the new methodology versus the old methodology, and any recommendations they may have to enhance that. B. Pellegrin will write a summary explaining exactly what they propose to do and the goals they wish to achieve. J. Rester will distribute the information next week and ask the reviewers to meet with the Subcommittee via conference call in 5 weeks to give their recommendations. After the conference call, the Subcommittee will ask the work group to meet to discuss the recommendations given, then they should give the Subcommittee a recommendation on whether the methodology should be changed or not. The motion was not seconded or voted on.

Planning a Juvenile Gulf Menhaden Survey

J. Rester stated the purpose of this agenda item was to determine a cost estimate of having a juvenile menhaden survey across the entire Gulf. As indicated in the summary he sent to the Subcommittee, they need some type of index to help with the menhaden stock assessment. **R. Lukens** said the current way the juvenile index is derived has been criticized in the stock assessment process as not being robust. He said there was a recommendation in the 2002 Menhaden FMP to do a menhaden recruitment study. After discussion, the Subcommittee decided to appoint an ad hoc work group to define exactly what type of data were needed, survey design and the type of gear that should be used.

J. Rester will contact the following people to ask if they will be on the work group (those not present at the meeting) and then set up a conference call for them to meet: Joe Smith, Ron Lukens, Vince Guillory, Jerry Mambretti, John Mareska and Read Hendon. There will be a report on this at the October meeting.

Other Business

J. Rester informed the Subcommittee the joint meeting will be in the first week of August in Charleston and he will provide more information when it becomes available. He asked the Subcommittee if they wish to consider not meeting in October because it is only two months after the joint meeting. The Subcommittee said they will decide in August and they will wait before each meeting to see if there are any pressing issues before canceling a meeting. Other suggestions were made to help save on travel expenses: only send the Chairman to the joint meeting, cancelling the August meeting, and to have conference calling set up in the meeting room for those who cannot travel. This will be an agenda item in August.

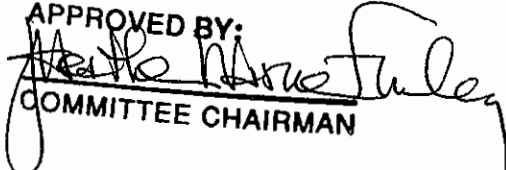
D. Donaldson asked the Subcommittee if they are still interested in coordinating a fishery independent dataset of all the different fishery independent databases in the Gulf of Mexico. The Subcommittee said yes and D. Donaldson will report on it in October .

K. Mitchell reminded the Subcommittee that if there are any changes to their initial proposal, an amendment must be submitted to E. Roche and K. Mitchell who will then send it to her before approval. They do not have a problem with changes to the original proposals, but the changes need to be on record through an amendment.

J. Hanifen invited everyone to join them in saying goodbye and best wishes to Dick Waller this evening.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

**TCC HABITAT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 59th Annual Spring Meeting
Monday, March 16, 2009
New Orleans, Louisiana**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman Heather 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 Finley, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Kevin Anson, ADCNR MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Susan Dingman, ADEM, Mobile, AL

Staff

Jeff Rester, Habitat/SEAMAP Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Cheryl Noble, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, Sportfish Restoration/ANS Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Larry Hartzog, MMS, New Orleans, LA
Bill Kiene, National Marine Sanctuaries, Galveston, TX
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Kent Smith, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Alton Waldrep, ADCNR MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Douglas Peter, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Jim Cowan, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Ron Lukens, Omega Protein
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the October 13, 2008 meeting were adopted without changes.

Administrative Report

J. Rester stated the Council's three Habitat Advisory Panels met in November and December. The Texas Habitat AP discussed the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program, issues facing the Texas oyster fishery, a spotted sea trout consumption advisory for Galveston Bay, Hurricane Ike impacts to habitat, an update on the Matagorda Ship Channel, and the Old River Cove restoration project. The Louisiana/Mississippi Habitat AP discussed the Donaldsonville to the Gulf levee project, Hurricane Gustav and Ike impacts to habitat, monitoring results from the 2008 Bonnet Carré Spillway opening, open water disposal of dredge material in Mississippi Sound, and an update on the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Project. The Florida/Alabama Habitat AP discussed building living shorelines, permit conditions and expansion of large area reef sites off Florida, examining the ecological and fishery function of artificial reefs in the north central Gulf of Mexico, the proposed Port Dolphin LNG Facility, and establishing penalties for seagrass scarring in Florida. **J. Rester** reported that the TORP LNG facility withdrew their deepwater port license application under threat of veto from the Governor of Alabama. TORP has met with resource agencies to discuss resubmitting their application for a closed loop facility that would use an ambient air vaporizer. **J. Rester** stated that the Port Dolphin LNG facility off Tampa was still on hold in the permitting process. The project has been on hold since June 2008. The Coast Guard has been working with Port Dolphin to analyze a new pipeline route that would avoid sand resources that local municipalities use for beach renourishment. A FEIS should be coming out sometime this summer.

Development of Florida's Best Management Practices for Inshore Artificial Reefs

K. Smith stated that Florida had an extensive offshore artificial reef program. For quite a while the offshore artificial reef program has used the Commission's Guidelines for Offshore Artificial Reef Materials document in determining suitable material for artificial reef construction. While Florida has built artificial reefs within estuarine areas, they did not have a similar document or any best management practices (BMP). **K. Smith** stated that Florida was now in the process of developing BMPs for inshore or estuarine reefs. He stated that Florida had defined inshore artificial reefs as fully submerged structures composed of non-polluting natural or man-made materials intentionally and legally placed on sovereign submerged lands and other submerged lands for which a regulatory permit was required. Inshore artificial reefs would be located in estuarine systems from the mouth of inlets to the upper estuary in bays, lagoons and other confined aquatic geographic features. Inshore artificial reefs would be deployed for the purposes of marine habitat, fisheries enhancement, recreation or mitigation and be comprised of materials that were stable and durable over the long term. He stated that stability was the state of not being displaced at the depth placed by storm energy rated at a minimum as a Category 3 hurricane event and that reef durability was the condition of remaining intact and functioning for a minimum of thirty years as a viable reef. He reported that natural resource surveys would be required within 500 feet of the reef with navigational clearance of 6 feet above the structure. He stated that Florida wanted clear ecological goals and objectives for private inshore artificial reefs with placement well out of navigation channels. He reported that Florida wanted to see individual reefs made from metal, concrete, or limestone that weighed 500 pounds per unit with any metal being a minimum of one quarter inch in thickness.

H. Finley asked how Florida was going to determine the density of artificial reef material. **K. Smith** stated that they had not finalized the method yet. **K. Anson** asked about the one quarter inch metal thickness and how this was determined to be suitable. **K. Smith** replied that the one quarter inch thickness requirement should allow the material to last in the marine environment for thirty years. **P. Cook** asked about Florida's aquatic preserves. **K. Smith** stated that aquatic preserves were set up to protect special aquatic areas in Florida. He stated that aquatic preserves were afforded a greater level of protection.

Development of Commission Best Management Practices for Inshore Artificial Reefs

J. Rester stated that he had used the draft Florida BMPs as a guide for developing the Commission's BMPs for inshore artificial reefs. He stated that he had sent the draft document out to everyone before the meeting for their review. He stated that he recognized that everything that might work for Florida might not work in all Gulf States. He stated that this was readily apparent when it came to the creation of low profile artificial reefs using oyster shell or crushed concrete. He wanted the Subcommittee to review the document and possibly draft BMPs for Commission adoption.

K. Anson stated that he had problems with several areas of the draft BMPs. He felt that they were overly specific and that any final document would need to be more general in nature. **H. Finley** agreed and suggested that a small group be formed to revise the BMPs and make them more general in nature. The Habitat Subcommittee along with the Artificial Reef Subcommittee could then review the more generalized BMPs. **K. Anson**, **H. Finley**, **J. Rester**, and **R. Mezich** agreed to help draft a new set of BMPs.

Estuarine and Coastal Habitats and Their Value to Fish and Fisheries in the Northern Gulf of Mexico

J. Cowan stated that the northern Gulf of Mexico has been called the Fertile Crescent due to the amount of fish that are caught there each year. He stated that this productivity is influenced heavily by the Mississippi River and the nutrients it provides. Many studies have shown the importance of Louisiana's wetlands as fish habitat, but there has been concern for a number of years over the impact of wetland loss and negative impacts to fishery production. **J. Cowan** stated that while hypoxia, eutrophication, bycatch, and wetland loss have been going on for decades that fish landings have remained relatively constant or increased. Next he discussed work that he and his graduate students had done to examine fishery use of different habitats. He discussed fish use of both inshore and offshore habitats. He discussed fish use of artificial reefs and work that had been done on how artificial reefs serve as habitat for reef fish through their life cycle. **J. Cowan** stated that natural habitats are important for red snapper and support distinct communities, but that artificial reefs do serve as habitat, but are not "typical habitat." He stated that ontogenetic habitat shifts are likely a function of structural complexity, not necessarily enhanced growth and feeding opportunities.

Update on the Habitat Section of the Oyster FMP

C. O'Brien stated that the Oyster FMP was currently being edited. She stated that a draft should be released by the summer.

Update on the Habitat Section of the Arenarius Fishery Profile

R. Mezich stated that the development of the fishery profile had been hampered by fishermen not differentiating between silver and sand sea trout. The species are hard to distinguish and overlap in most areas, with silver sea trout being thought to occur further offshore than sand sea trout.

Other Business

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

**TCC DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 59th Annual Spring Meeting
Monday, March 16, 2009
New Orleans, Louisiana**

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

Members

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

Staff

David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry B. Simpson, GSMFC Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Donna Bellais, ComFIN Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, FIN Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, GSMFC, IT Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Beverly Sauls, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Bob Zales II, PCBA – CCGF, Panama City, FL
Roy Crabtree, NOAA Fisheries/Southeast Regional Office, St. Petersburg, FL
Heidi Henniger, Olfish-Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association, Bedford, NH
Jeff Barger, Environmental Defense Fund, Austin, TX
Rob Andrews, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD
Preston Pate, NOAA Fisheries/MRIP
Tommy Williams, Daybrook Fisheries, Baton Rouge, LA
Claude Peterson, Bluefin Data LLC, Prairieville, LA
David McKinney, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Environmental Defense Fund, Austin, TX
Bonnie Ponwith, NOAA Fisheries/Southeast Fishery Science Center, Miami, FL
Pam Anderson, Capt. Anderson Marina/CCGF/GOMARS
Ken Anderson, Capt. Anderson Marina/CCGF/GOMARS
Logan Respass, TX Sea Grant College Program, College Station, TX
Gary Jarvis, Charter Boat Back Down 2, Destin, FL
Pamela Jarvis, Charter Boat Back Down 2, Destin, FL
Tracy Redding, AAA Charters, Foley, AL
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
Robin Riechers, TPWD, Austin, TX

Suzy Delaune, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Robert Boothe Jr, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Schuyler Dartez, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Myron Fischer, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Bill Blome, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
Bonnie Spinazzola, Olfish-Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association, Bedford, NH
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries/Southeast Regional Office, St. Petersburg, FL
Ed Sapp, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Bobbi Walker, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Mike Rowell, Orange Beach Charter Boat Assoc., Fairhope, AL
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mike Nugent, Port Aransas Boatmen Assoc., Port Aransas, TX
Terry Cody, Rockport, TX
Chad Hanson, Pew Environmental Group, Crawfordville, FL
Michael Harden, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Blake LeBlanc, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Mark Griffith, Mobile Scheduling Solutions, Havarre, FL
Tom Becker, MS Charter Boat Captains Assoc., Biloxi, MS
Thomas Putnam, Half Hitch Tackle

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on October 13, 2008 in Key Largo, Florida were approved as written.

Discussion of For-hire Data Collection Methods

R. Crabtree mentioned that recreational data collection methods in the Gulf of Mexico for-hire industry have become an important topic. This meeting was proposed to bring all interested parties together to attempt to coordinate efforts to revise data collection methods for the recreational for-hire fishery. We all agree that there is room for improvement based on current data collection methodologies. He stressed that if we can all work together and also try to work together with the MRIP program the final product should result in better for-hire data collection methods in the Gulf of Mexico.

Project Presentations

GOMARS Project – **B. Zales** is presenting based on a coalition of for-hire captains, private recreational anglers and industry professionals. Zales stated that their proposed data collection effort would provide better data at lower cost under a real time reporting

scenario. They propose to collect data using a variety of methods including cell phones, internet, smart phones, and logbooks via vessel monitoring systems. GOMARS proposes using cell phones and satellite phones for departure/arrival reports with web based weekly log book reporting. Zales stated this should be easy to implement because cell phones are widely used and available. The flexibility of available reporting methods with this data collection method should improve compliance among industry participants. **Zales** suggested that this methodology should be tested for the red snapper fishery during the 2009 fishing season but he also stated this methodology could easily be expanded to other species. The electronic logbook portion would collect number of anglers fishing, time spent fishing, number of red snapper caught, thrown back, and harvested. Captains would enter a departure time, expected arrival time, their arrival location, and would receive a departure confirmation code. Upon arriving back at the dock, the captains would enter their confirmation code, confirm their arrival time, and enter the number of red snapper anglers and total red snapper landings for the boat. They would then receive an arrival confirmation code confirming they entered the required data. They would be required to enter the number of red snapper landed and discarded in federal and state waters. The system is setup to allow captains to enter and save vessel information regarding primary ports and/or marina locations, contact telephone numbers, and email address. **Zales** suggested that a modified dockside intercept survey could be used to validate landings by coordinating sampler site selection with GOMARS arrival confirmations. **Zales** proposed a weekly log book reporting scenario and suggested the continued use of MRFSS and for-hire survey data for additional validation and comparison. Results should provide numbers of anglers fishing for red snapper, time fished, number caught, number discarded and the impact on state versus federal waters. **Zales** proposed having 3-5 regional workshops in the Gulf of Mexico region to explain and educate industry participants. To establish this new reporting system the GOMARS program would request that federal charter and head boat reef fish permit holders would be mandated to participate in order to renew their permits each year. Full implementation would require the Gulf coast states to require all non-federal for-hire reef permit holders to participate in GOMARS. **C. Perret** asked how quickly their proposed system would be able to provide usable fishery management data. **Zales** said the data would still need to be reviewed by NOAA Fisheries but the current time schedules could be improved to produce usable results much quicker. **K. Cuevas** asked what the budget for this proposed survey would be and if the costs would be more than the current sampling methodologies. **Zales** said the maximum cost would be \$100,000 per year but it might be less. **L. Simpson** asked what the difference between anglers attempting to catch red snapper and those that actually catch red snapper. **Zales** mentioned they are hoping to quantify these categories instead of just using permitted number of anglers as the total number of anglers impacting the red snapper fishery.

Louisiana For-hire Trip Ticket Project – **M. Kasprzak** stated that the 2008 Louisiana legislation passed act 564 which is a voluntary for-hire reporting system to collect number of trips, number of anglers, area fished, time fished, trip origin, and any information determined by the Louisiana commission to be necessary to properly manage the fishery resources of the state, and any information required by the commission to prepare stock assessments. The reporting system was originally introduced as a

mandatory reporting system but came out of committee as a voluntary system. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) will be asking for captains name and licenses held, vessel name and registration numbers, number of anglers, trip dates and times, actual fishing time, primary area fished, average depth fished, reef planning areas, access type, fishing methods, and optional information on species caught, quantity caught, target species, and dispositions. The data provided by the licensee will be kept confidential. **Kasprzak** mentioned many of the captains are very concerned about confidentiality issues. Louisiana has contracted with Claude Petersen who manages the commercial trip ticket programs for all the Gulf States. This program is a pc based system that resides on each participant's computer. Data are transmitted to a secure server and then onto LADWF. Captains are required to report monthly but can do so more often. The program allows for many default variables (access type, method, etc) to allow for more streamlined data entry. LADWF will continue the FHS to help validate the voluntary log book program. LADWF is concerned about non-reporting bias because of the voluntary nature of the program. This will also limit the ability to use these data for stock assessment purposes. LADWF has a very large inshore guide fishery and are currently skeptical about the amount of compliance they will get from this sector of their fishery. They have arranged to beta test the program with seven captains. After testing is complete they will do some outreach to try to obtain more participation from the entire for-hire fishery in Louisiana. **S. Atran** asked if Louisiana law has the flexibility to change this system to a mandatory program with Gulf wide implementation if we adopted some form of a mandatory program. **Kasprzak** believes their state law is flexible enough to work with that. **B. Zales** asked if LADWF has talked with the offshore licensed captains to determine their level of participation. **Kasprzak** mentioned the offshore fleet seems willing to participate but the inshore guides have expressed some concerns about the burden of reporting. **B. Sauls** asked if the catch portion of the reporting system was optional. **Kasprzak** said the bill was structured that way but most captains have stated they are willing to provide the catch information. **R. Cody** asked how LADWF plans to evaluate the program after two years. **Kasprzak** mentioned they hope to evaluate the quality of the data produced, burden to LADWF staff, response rates, and estimate comparison with existing data collection methods.

MRIP For-hire Pilot Projects – **P. Pate** mentioned Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) was developed as a strategy to respond to the National Research Council (NRC) recommendations for improving recreational data collections. MRIP develops new projects through sharing information with all managing partners and stakeholders. The for-hire workgroup under MRIP has been asked by the operations team to generate a proposal for a log book pilot project in the for-hire fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. **B. Sauls** is the coordinator for the for-hire workgroup under MRIP. **B. Sauls** mentioned the NRC review recommended mandatory reporting tied to an annual permit renewal process. They recommended strict verification and enforcement components. Data should also be made available in a timely manner. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) recognized log books alone might not be enough. The for-hire workgroup contracted three consultants in 2008 to review current for-hire data collection programs. The consulting group recommended the universal use of logbooks and included a best practice recommendation list. The reporting system should be at the

trip level and should be reported weekly. The consultants favored internet or web based reporting with a back up of telephone and fax. Procedures need to be established to identify missing reports is essential. The new system must maintain a complete for-hire vessel database to identify non-respondents, contacting them via telephone calls. The new system should utilize probability based sampling if non-respondent pool is large. Initial estimates should be based on raw logbook data but also must be adjusted based on validation which would include intercept and at-sea observations. Statistical methods to impute data for missing records would improve the new system. **Sauls** said the group recognized mandatory reporting would be beneficial but probably not attainable. They also provided guidance on adjusting the intercept procedures for validation purposes. Changing fishing pressures, probability based sampling of sites, and defined time periods for samplers were a few of the consultant's suggestions and MRIP is currently working on these reviewing these methodological changes. Currently for-hire vessels with moratorium permits are required to participate in either the southeast head boat survey, the MRFSS for-hire survey, or the Texas Parks and Wildlife Survey. Each survey is unique to a small geographic region of portion of the Gulf of Mexico fishery. Currently vessels that do not hold federal permits only participate in these surveys voluntarily. The southeast head boat survey is a mandatory reporting system, but data are submitted monthly. There is also a small amount of non-compliance so the need for imputing missing data is necessary. MRIP proposals for 2009/2010 will hope to design imputation methods that could apply to other logbook programs, improve timeliness of data submission, develop probability based sample design for dockside catch and validation, and evaluate methods to integrate a head boat observer program for discards. The MRFSS for-hire survey was originally designed as a voluntary survey. The Gulf of Mexico has a refusal rate less than 10% for non-permitted vessels but a 20% non-contact rate which is currently unenforceable. The portion of non-contacts is significant and the amount of non-response bias is currently unknown. A proposal submitted to MRIP in 2009 is designed so Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, NOAA Fisheries, and industry representatives will work together to design a pilot logbook reporting system for the Gulf of Mexico. MRIP hopes to identify minimum data elements in cooperation with state agency staff and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fishery Science Center, need to determine necessary reporting frequency (real time, daily, weekly), evaluate practicality of reporting methods (with industry input), determine state level participation (willingness by states to migrate to a mandatory reporting system), evaluate cost and benefits of various reporting options, identify existing data sources for potential validation of self-reported data, identify methods for tracking non-response/non-compliance, and develop recommendations and preferred alternatives for proposed logbook reporting system. MRIP then wants to develop statistically sound methods for estimation working with statisticians with expertise in survey design and analysis. The last step would provide a proposal to MRIP in 2010 for funding to begin outreach to industry and begin testing in the Gulf of Mexico. This would provide recommendations for implementation and what the expected benchmark period would be. **M. Rowell** asked how soon MRIP would be able to collect data. **Pate** mentioned the MRIP strategy is deliberate and scientific based. **R. Andrews** also mentioned MRIP is speeding up the process for identifying project plans so hopefully this will allow for a pilot logbook project to start in late 2009.

SOS Electronic Logbook Project – **J. Barger** reported Save Ourselves (SOS) is an industry led initiative hoping to improve management in the for-hire fishery. The primary motivator is the pending regulations of annual catch limits and accountability measures. The major component of the SOS plan is an integrated logbook system. SOS goals are to develop a functioning electronic log book, integrate it with vessel monitoring systems (VMS), to demonstrate viability of real-time data collection, and broaden the discussion of alternatives for data collection in the for-hire sector. Project phases have included background research, data modeling, software development, beta testing (end of April 2009 on 10-15 vessels), a pilot study (extended through red snapper season and maybe through all of 2009), and a final report with recommendations. Data will be transmitted immediately after each trip, VMS data will be transmitted to GSMFC, NOAA Fisheries and a third party university to help verify data were transmitted. The SOS current proposal is more cost effective and efficient for validation and enforcement. **H. Henniger** with Olfish presented the software they are developing for the SOS project. The software program can work on all levels of computers and they are working on a smart phone application. The program collects everything from trip level data to catch and harvest data, economic information, and biological information. Currently they have built in a recreational and commercial data configurations since some fisherman hold multiple licenses. The software has some data entry validation built into it to help prevent data entry mistakes. Many of the questions have pre-populated lists of values to select from that help the fishermen with data entry. The program has the ability to collect angler data that might be useful for the national saltwater angler registry program. This program uses a large amount of validation features to ensure integrity. Users must have a login and port agents can have immediate access to vessel computer database if necessary. The software tracks all changes made to a trip in the database. Data is stored as .xml files and are either sent by the user, by a time event, or declarations based on a change GPS location. Reports are sent as .xml via email and can be secured or encrypted. **S. Atran** asked if they have implemented any recreational reporting systems. **Henniger** mentioned they have a pilot program in Australian recreational private fishery. **M. Rowell** mentioned the Olfish program looked very sophisticated and asked if the average person that is not computer skilled can be taught how to do this. **Henniger** said the program can be scaled back and is easy to learn how to use. **E. Sapp** asked about costs of software, licensing, and monthly subscriptions. **Barger** mentioned the pilot program is fully funded at no cost to the captains but costs for full implementation are not yet determined.

S. Atran mentioned an abstract was included with the meeting materials about a presentation that will be given at the next Gulf council meeting. It highlights a simple cheap data collection system that uses cell phone technology. He wanted everyone to take a look at that information.

Project Evaluations

R. Cody mentioned a recommendation on the best proposed methodology is probably outside the scope of this group at this time. Possibly a first step is to develop a vehicle of communication between the various logbook programs and MRIP. **S. Atran** asked how

amenable is MRIP to the other data collection plans that have been proposed or is MRIP committed to developing a new pilot program. **P. Pate** stated MRIP is not committed to any particular methodology but is still evaluating all of the options available to them. **R. Andrews** also stated there are certain federal legal requirements that ensure competition for selecting vendors that must ensure best value to the government. **R. Cody** mentioned it is going to take time because we are dealing with federal and state governments and those processes take time. **Cody** also mentioned that we should be hesitant to limit the scope of any logbook program to one species or one area. **Zales** thinks based on the current economic conditions the cost that the fleet would have absorb needs to be a big consideration with any new reporting system. **M. Kasprzak** thinks all of the proposed programs have good aspects but each program depends on self reported data and without good validation methods the data are still going to be heavily questioned. **M. Nugent** mentioned to be careful that no program has full for-hire industry wide support. Some areas of the for-hire industry are unaware of the current proposed changes. **C. Hanson** asked how the dockside intercept survey could be used to help validate self reported data. **Cody** agreed that we need a validation tool that is a proven acceptable method that allows for a useful comparison. **Kasprzak** asked how we would proceed if we develop a validation tool that shows a mismatch between logbook and validation tool data. **Donaldson** mentioned that we have not developed that method yet but relying on multiple validation tools would be beneficial. **Andrews** stated MRIP will be looking for input from independent review team to help generate methods for using the validation data based on whatever validation tools are developed. Methods will also need to be developed to account for vessels that do not report as 100% compliance is unlikely to achieve. **Simpson** asked if someone could explain past, current, future plans for no cost extensions to the plan for VMS implementation. **Crabtree** stated for the past several years NOAA Fisheries has reimbursed captains for the price of the least expensive accepted unit. Captains are required to pay for installation and there is also a monthly fee associated with the unit. A similar plan would likely be used for an electronic logbook program if adopted. **T. Putnam** mentioned mandatory reporting needs to have a penalty associated with it before it might start working. **Cody** asked Henniger if their program can pair the catch data with VMS software. Henniger said the software has its own GPS feed so it can be location tagged at the time of entry. **C. Denson** mentioned that the need for real-time data needs to be defined (daily, every week, or bi-weekly). **Zales** mentioned the GOMARS project only requires daily reporting for basic information (trip date, number of anglers). Then the landings and details would be submitted on a weekly basis. **Kasprzak** stated that LDWF is trying to work with MRIP because if the results from their logbook are drastically different they can have a logical response to help explain the differences. **Denson** asked if the commercial IFQ system could be used as template for the recreational for-hire sector. **Andrews** stated that the for-hire workgroup is going to build off several of the existing reporting systems to help with efficiency and cost.

After a long discussion the subcommittee agreed on the following recommendations:

Project Recommendations

1. Implement a mandatory logbook for trip level reporting in the for-hire sector in Gulf of Mexico
2. Need to consider all available technology for collecting these data.
3. Need to develop a program with compliance and enforcement methods.
4. Need to have a statistically proven validation method.
5. Need to develop pilot programs complimentary with MRIP.
6. Programs need to collect all necessary data elements as determined by fishery managers and stock assessment scientists.
7. Develop outreach and education for any adopted logbook programs as well as promote conversation between MRIP and the various proposed projects.
8. The development and implementation of these methods need to be a cooperative effort between the states, GSMFC, NOAA Fisheries, and the for-hire industry.

S. Atran asked what the timeline would be for pilot projects. **P. Pate** said likely pilot programs would start likely by October 1, 2009 with programs running into 2010. **Cody** mentioned a full year of data collection might not be necessary. **L. Simpson** mentioned this process is designed as a cooperative effort and working together with the states and federal entities is essential. **Cody** reiterated that data collection needs extend farther than red snapper and we should not neglect state waters species or specific geographic areas.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

**EMERGENCY DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAM (EDRP)
MINUTES – 59th Annual Spring Meeting
Tuesday, March 17, 2009
New Orleans, Louisiana**

The 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
Alton Waldrep, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Kevin Anson, ADCNR/AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jim Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mike Brainard, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Richard Cody, FWC-FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX
Mark Berrigan, FLDOACS, Tallahassee, FL

Others

Ellie Roche, NOAA-NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
Jeff Barger, Environmental Defense Fund, Austin, TX
Randy Pausina, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Roy Crabtree, NOAA-NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Joe Shepard, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Bonnie Powith, NMFS/SEFSC, Miami, FL
Jill Jensen, NMFS, New Orleans, LA
Laura Deslatte, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Lara Ballard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Logan Respass, Texas Sea Grant, College Station, Texas
Rush Gaude, Louisiana Sea Grant, Belle Chasse, LA

Staff

Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS
Ginny Herring, Administrative Officer, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, EDRP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, *GSMFC Assistant Director*, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, Systems Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry Simpson, *GSMFC Executive Director*, Ocean Springs, MS

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The 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
Alton Waldrep, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Kevin Anson, ADCNR/AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jim Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mike Brainard, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Richard Cody, FWC-FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX
Mark Berrigan, FLDOACS, Tallahassee, FL

Others

Ellie Roche, NOAA-NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
Jeff Barger, Environmental Defense Fund, Austin, TX
Randy Pausina, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Roy Crabtree, NOAA-NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Joe Shepard, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Bonnie Powith, NMFS/SEFSC, Miami, FL
Jill Jensen, NMFS, New Orleans, LA
Laura Deslatte, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Lara Ballard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Logan Respass, Texas Sea Grant, College Station, Texas
Rush Gaude, Louisiana Sea Grant, Belle Chasse, LA

Staff

Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS
Ginny Herring, Administrative Officer, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, EDRP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, *GSMFC Assistant Director*, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, Systems Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry Simpson, *GSMFC Executive Director*, Ocean Springs, MS

Opening Comments

Ralph Hode made opening comments thanking the states, NOAA-NMFS representatives, and the GSMFC staff for their attendance.

Participants and visitors were introduced.

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of October 14, 2008 held in Key Largo, Florida were presented for approval. **There being no changes to the minutes a motion was made and seconded and the minutes were approved as submitted.**

Agenda

Hode then opened the meeting and called for approval and/or amendments to the agenda. **There being no changes, a motion was made and seconded and the agenda was approved as submitted.**

Introduction and Purpose

Special recognition was given to **Ellie Roche** who once again commended the states for timely reporting and the GSMFC staff for not only its reporting but also for the timeliness of interim reports as periodically required.

Hode gave a PowerPoint presentation which addressed spending by state within each of the sub award categories for both EDRP I and EDRP II. Specific emphasis was placed on the fact that EDRP I spending was at approximately 40 percent of its budget while the timeline for the grant was at its midpoint. It was noted that while there was no reason for concern at this point, there was in fact justification for awareness of time limitations on the part of the participating states. It was also recognized that some projects were not scheduled to begin until 2009-2010 and that there had been two amendments which necessarily re-aligned otherwise planned spending to the latter part of the grant cycle. Those amendments involved deleting funds from Habitat elements and re-allocating them into the Cooperative Research element for continued stock assessment and repairs to the sea water intake system at the Claude Petet Mariculture Center in Alabama, and for economic assessments of recovery in commercial fishery components of the Louisiana fishing industry.

Vail inquired as to the policy regarding possible extensions in the event they became necessary and was advised by both **Herring** and **Roche** that extensions could be considered if there were needs. **Larry Simpson** pointed out that the administrative budget for both grants were fixed at five years each and that if extensions became necessary, the administrative budget would likely incur an increase.

With reference to EDRP II spending, **Hode** indicated that Gulf wide reimbursements were well ahead of the grant timeline. Program coordinators and principal investigators were commended

noting that nearly 65 percent of the \$85 million appropriated for economic assistance to the Gulf fishing industry had been distributed during the first 18 months of the 60 month cycle. It was also noted that while both Florida and Texas continued to qualify their potential "Additional Assistance for TED/BRD Compliance" participants, the payments to fishermen would be minimal at best due to the number of license holders and the amount budgeted under this element. Both states indicated that they were continuing to investigate federal and state records for potential citations, and that these were expected to be finalized and the required financial distributions made over the next several months.

Overview of Projects

FLORIDA

Mark Berrigan provided a report on progress to date under the Oyster Recovery and Rehabilitation Program for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services/Division of Aquaculture noting that both programs are fully engaged.

In the EDRP I element **Berrigan** indicated that the Public Reef Restoration Program is fully operational and that the Department continues to stock pile cultch materials for reef restoration in Apalachicola Bay, Escambia Bay and East Bay; as well as at strategic locations for ease of access by commercial lease holders working under contract through the recovery program. It was pointed out that public reef restoration in Escambia and East Bays continues to be delayed pending receipt of a new deck barge which will be used for transport of materials to areas more remote from the cultch stock pile in Apalachicola Bay. The barge, which is funded under EDRP II, is expected to be completed and delivered in late April.

Berrigan also pointed out that spending from earlier grants was finalized last year and that because of this spending under the EDRP I program was just beginning. He indicated that they expected to begin remote cultch planting (out of the Apalachicola area) within the next few months; and that plantings would be seen in Pensacola Bay, St Andrews Bay, and in the Cedar Key areas. Work will be contracted through four of the states recognized oyster associations.

Berrigan reported that the FDACS continues to negotiate with appropriate agencies, including the COE and local entities as well as the State, regarding ownership of properties planned for use in relocating the Departments loading facilities. At present, loading of cultch materials is being accomplished in the Apalachicola marina which is creating space problems for public use. Once in place, the barge will be in a position to disperse materials for both EDRP I and EDRP II planned oyster restoration activities.

Dale Diaz inquired as to the availability and cost of FDACS fossilized cultch source. It was reported that the cultch quarry is approximately fifteen miles inland, and that costs are about \$30.00 per ton including transportation to the stock yard. By comparison, it was noted that limestone costs are approximately \$1.00 more per ton. The abundance of the fossilized material is unknown at this time.

Ginny Vail gave a report on the TED/BRD component of EDRP II indicating that distribution is expected to begin in June. She indicated that in addition to verification of "non-violations" certain state contract policies and purchasing requirements caused delays in the distributions.

Suggestions were made that the Department consider utilizing a single contractor, such as an oyster or related association or professional consultant to qualify and distribute the payments. **Larry Simpson** inquired as the feasibility of GSMFC acting as the distribution agent or clearing house on the part of the state and was advised by its financial staff that while it could possibly be done, the workload may be overwhelming.

Vail also reported that the Cooperative Research job involving oyster larval dispersal studies in the Pensacola Bay (EDRP I) region are continuing as personnel address professional contract logistics and the issues of fresh water inflow. She also advised that Dr. Bill Arnold, principal investigator for the Pensacola Bay Oyster Dispersal modeling project, had announced his leaving from the FDFW Research Division. A new principal investigator has yet to be appointed.

Richard Cody reported that the for-hire program, funded under EDRP II, has completed implementation of the electronic log-book reporting system. The web based reporting system (WBRIS) survey instrument web site was demonstrated at the meeting and is planned for use on an incentive basis (i.e., for pay) for a period of one year. There followed questions regarding non-charter reports, captains' summary data reports and tentative reporting criteria. It was noted that the non-charter reports and captains' summaries could be incorporated into the system; however, the greatest concern at this time was the potential for program failure when the incentives were depleted.

ALABAMA

Kevin Anson gave a report on the Alabama EDRP I programs indicating that approximately 200 acres of shallow water oyster cultch plants had been completed to date. He also indicated that additional deeper water plants are scheduled for the summer of 2009.

Additionally, **Anson** reported on the recent changes to the first Habitat sub award, which initially provided for resource habit mapping. Nearly \$2.5 million have been re-allocated to the Cooperative Research element to cover the costs of additional data sheets and the completion of the seawater intake system for the Claude Peteet Mariculture Center. Under the second Habitat sub-award, it was indicated that the work is being coordinated through the state's Lands Division which is currently engaged in engineering designs and plans to build approximately 5200 feet of surge/wave attenuators utilizing commercial stabilization components depending upon costs and effectiveness. Additionally, **Anson** reported that this effort will result in the creation of approximately 35 acres of additional marsh and implementation of several smaller shoreline stabilization projects.

With reference to the first Cooperative Research element, **Anson** indicated that oyster fishermen were unable to participate on the stock assessment program due to loss of oysters to oyster drills introduced into select areas by breaks in the states barrier island chains. As a result, plans are to

train and utilize displaced oystermen to sample drill infected areas in lieu of trip tickets. The resultant data will then be used to map conditions of affected areas.

Reporting on the TEDS/BRD component of EDRP II, Anson indicated that it had been completed. With reference to the ASBI component it was reported that software issues were still being addressed on the remote monitoring of ~~commercial and~~ public access sites. It was also reported that much of the distribution of assistance funds to area businesses and related industries had been completed; and that, with recent amendments, 48 of 139 gillnet licenses had been bought back.

It was reported that the trip tickets gathered to date were being electronically filed but that analysis of the data sheets had not yet begun.

MISSISSIPPI

Dale Diaz provided an overview of Disaster Recovery efforts for both EDRP I and II; and began by addressing the state's use of auditors and accountants to aid in the monitoring and documentation review of applications for assistance. As a result, and with the aid of staff, the Department had investigated and prosecuted a total of six fraud cases in which recipients had been found guilty or were pending court hearings for making erroneous or fraudulent claims for reimbursements. Diaz also indicated that through normal monitoring and inspections a number of fishermen had been disqualified from continued participation in the program due to improper reporting or other policy and procedure violations in the EDRP I element. He reported that most of the trip ticket work was nearing completion under the Cooperative Research (EDRP I) element. With the exception of minor work remaining on the finfish and charter boat projects, all other trip ticket elements had been completed.

Under the EDRP II program **Diaz** reported that the Job Application and Training (ACF) program is being administered by the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory USM educational division. It is a free program designed to address alternative marine fishery opportunities for Mississippi fishermen who no longer wished to remain in the traditional fishing business. He also reported that MDMR had entered into an agreement with the NGI group for administration of projects under the Governors Alliance program; that the final audit of claims by Omega Protein for a grant to cover unreimbursed losses during the recovery period had been completed; that an engineering analysis was being conducted under the ASBI program for the development of a working waterfront in the D'Iberville area; and that the oyster stewardship project was ongoing and continued to encourage fishermen to conserve resources on a voluntary basis.

LOUISIANA

Jim Hanifen provided a PowerPoint overview of activities under the Disaster Recovery Program for the State of Louisiana, indicating that the recent impacts of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike has in fact caused the Department to begin re-evaluating programs so that assistance to the industry could be provided much more quickly.

Under EDRP I the primary effort is seen in the State's POLR program. There are about 580 active oystermen involved in an assortment of activities which includes marking reefs, cultivation, planting of cultch and bedding oysters. To date approximately \$7.8 million dollars have been sent out. Under the public reef restoration program, reef repair has been seen in the Mississippi Sound area of Lake Borgne and in Black Bay. Additionally, side scan work is being conducted in Hackberry Bay and in Calcasieu Lake areas west of the River with the intent of determining if additional cultch in these areas would be beneficial. The Department is working to do the same in Sabine Lake; and, is currently taking bids for cultch plants in these areas. Additionally, **Hanifen** indicated that the state is currently negotiating with professionals for the storing and management of records pertaining to nearly 480,000 acres of leased water bottoms.

Hanifen acknowledged that an amendment had been facilitated in the Habitat program whereby nearly \$13.5 was reallocated to the Cooperative Research element for economic impact analysis and for catch reports. It was noted that the state continues to work with the Coast Guard to define debris areas. Because of the Coast Guard taking over the debris removal program, the referenced funds were re-allocated to Cooperative Research.

Under the EDRP II program, **Hanifen** indicated that funds are going out to impacted fishermen very well with approximately 80 percent of all assistance funding having been distributed to date.

TEXAS

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

The State's mapping is ongoing and has proven beneficial as the preliminary work is being used as the state assesses the impacts to its oyster grounds following Hurricane Ike. To date approximately 80,000 acres in the Galveston Bay area have been mapped. It was pointed out that staff was able to quickly assess the damage to oysters in the Bay area following Ike and to determine the dollar value of losses.

Under the Habitat Restoration component, the state has finally received COE permits for cultch plants in several locations. Initial plans called for plants to begin in the spring of 2009, however, following Hurricane Ike in 2008 FEMA requested that no plants be undertaken until the debris could be removed from the fishing grounds. **Robinson** also indicated that programmed modeling work in the Sabine Lake system has been completed and that a preliminary report has been received. He also reported that programmed debris removal work under contract with Jefferson County, Texas has been completed.

In the EDRP II element for assistance for TED BRD compliance, **Robinson** indicated that the State had identified approximately 1200 fishermen who could potentially be eligible for assistance. He noted that the state, like Florida, was having problems in isolating non-violators and that if they were reduced to making payments to all shrimpers, the 24,000 dollars scheduled for this element would be of little benefit to the fishermen. **Robinson** indicated that this element should be completed by the end of this year.

In describing the Texas Assistance to Business and Industry element, **Robinson** said the assistance will involve additional cultch plants. He added that given the damage to the Galveston reefs following Ike, additional cultch plants would indeed provide long term benefits to the industry. He also noted that the damage assessments revealed that the damage to area oyster beds following Ike were well beyond current levels of funding under EDRP I and II. He estimated that approximately 8000 acres in the Galveston Bay area were impacted because of silting. Additionally, **Robinson** said that 75% of the state's access points were lost; that there were no boat access points in the Galveston area proper; and that early estimates for restoration is set at nearly 7 million dollars. Overall losses in the oyster industry were estimated at 360 million dollars.

There being no further discussion or business the meeting was adjourned.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES 59th Annual Spring Meeting
Tuesday, March 17, 2009
New Orleans, LA**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

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

Members

Chris Blankenship, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Walter Chataginer, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jeff Mayne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Karen Raine, NOAA General Counsel, St. Petersburg, FL
Carmen DeGeorge, U.S. Coast Guard, New Orleans, LA
Brett Norton, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Hal Robbins, NOAA/OLE, St. Petersburg, FL

Others

Tracy Dunn, NOAA/OLE, St. Petersburg, FL
Chez Green, NOAA/GCEL/Silver Spring, MD
Jeff Barger, EDF, Austin, TX
Logan Respass, Texas Sea Grant, College Station, TX
Ed Sapp, GMFMC, Gainesville, FL
David McKinney, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX
Jay Diez, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Debbie Batista, NMFS, New Orleans, LA
Jill Jenson, NMFS, New Orleans, LA
James Kejonen, NOAA/OLE, Slidell, LA
Steve Campbell, NOAA/OLE, Slidell, LA
Preston Pate, NOAA Fisheries, Newport, NC

Staff

Teri Freitas, GSMFC, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

The Committee unanimously approved the agenda as written.

Approval of Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the October 14, 2008 meeting held in Key Largo, FL. **K. Raines** moved to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by **H. Robbins** and passed unanimously.

Status of MRIP

Preston Pate of NOAA gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). MRIP will enhance accountability, timeliness and decision making ability. It will not be a silver bullet solution to all fisheries management issues. MRIP will be tracking their progress through quarterly updates, progress reports on current pilot projects by work groups/teams and identifying upcoming activities and projects that are in development. The design and analysis work group will ensure surveys and subsequent analysis meet managers' needs for timeliness, precision and accuracy. The Data Management and standards work group will ensure that managers and scientists understand the characteristics, strengths, and limitations of the data. The Highly Migratory Species work group will ensure an accurate accounting through targeted data collection. The For-Hire work group will ensure data collection methods mesh well with the unique challenges of sampling this sector. The National Saltwater Angler Registry team will create a "phone book" of saltwater anglers and improve our ability to contact anglers and generate a more detailed picture of recreational fishing. The Communication and Education team will ensure effective communication, open dialogue, and continued engagement among all stakeholders. The guiding principle of MRIP is ongoing conversation with anglers, scientists, and policy makers about sustainability and a bright future for fishing. For any further information on the program, go to the MRIP website: countmyfish.noaa.gov.

Joint Enforcement Agreements

H. Robbins reported that the JEA Program will be confined to the same amount of money as last year. The money was approved last week, but NOAA has not received any details. NOAA reported that they have established VMS linkage and that this is a big step forward. **H. Robbins** also reported that North Carolina was interested in joining the JEA program, but there is a question where the money will come from. **T. Dunn** reported that he expects the target date for JEA dispersment to be in June.

K. Raines reported that she emailed her report GSMFC for distribution to the LEC members.

The LEC members discussed resending the letter to the new Secretary of Commerce and copying the congressional delegation of each of the Gulf States. **A motion was made by J. Mayne and seconded B. Norton to request that the GSMFC Executive Director resend the letter supporting the continuation of the authorization and appropriations for the JEAs and Commissions support of increasing these funds from \$13.9M to \$30M and copying the Gulf States congressional delegation. Raines and Robbins abstained from voting and the motion passed.**

J. Mayne gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Joint Enforcement Program. Louisiana has five JEA patrol regions; 397 miles general coastline, 301,148 recreational vessels; 13,383 commercial vessels; 12,184 commercial fishing licenses; 6,000 JEA contacts/year; and 25 mid-range vessels as of 9/30/2008. **J. Mayne** reviewed the JEA Patrol Contact Form that the agent completes each time there is a contact while on JEA patrol. Louisiana's Joint Enforcement Program (JEP) uses visual basic (computer language) and is a web-based application that can have multiple end-users from remote locations. The data is

transferred via the internet to a Microsoft Access file in a central location on a local server in real time; it interfaces with the SQL Enforcement Database to capture citation and warning data in real time and interfaces with our payroll system in real time to capture agent data. The monthly report calculates the month and year; at sea, dockside and land hours; and the number of inspections. It breaks down enforcement action by FMP categories, interfaces with the Enforcement database to list citation number and FMP and lists most data needed for the JEA monthly report. LEC members then discussed the feasibility of using this program in their states.

IJF Program Activity

Arenarius Profile – **W. Chatagner** reported he emailed the LEC members asking for their state information on the white trout and responses have been received. **T. Freitas** reported that the Arenarius Profile is moving along, but due to the lack of funding, the IJF program has been using the GoToMeeting webinar service along with a conference call to review the drafted sections.

Oyster FMP – **T. Freitas** reported that again due to the lack of funding the Oyster TTF has held two GoToMeeting conference calls to edit the already drafted sections.

GSMFC Pocket Guide and Annual Law Summary

T. Freitas reviewed the states requested quantities of the new pocket size (4 ½ x 8) guide and reminded LEC members to return their corrections to the guide to her as soon as possible. The estimated printing cost for 1,000 pocket guides is approximately \$3,651.00. Once the new pocket guides are printed they will be mailed directly to the LEC members for distribution to the field officers. The GSMFC will continue to print the old Law Summary in much smaller quantities for historical purposes.

State/Federal Reports

Florida – **B. Norton** reported that there were rule changes increasing the recreational minimum size limit for greater amberjack to 30 FL and there was decrease in the recreational bag limit of gag grouper in state waters of the GOM from five gag grouper to two gag grouper; both effective January 1, 2009. In July of 2008 the Florida legislature funded the derelict vessel (DV) removal program by appropriating \$1.5M to the FWC boating and airways section. These funds were dedicated solely to the removal of many of the abandoned derelict vessels littering Florida's waterways along the coastlines and rivers. March 16-23, 2009 the Wear It Florida Campaign will emphasize the voluntary wearing of life jackets with a focus on educating the public about inflatable life jacket models. Staff just completed the first full year of tri-annual observations to determine the wear-rate of life jackets among recreational boaters in both Pinellas and Polk counties. The FWC entered into a MOA with the Venom 1 snake anti-venin program. Venom 1 is operated by the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, stockpiles snake anti-venin for use in the southeast United States. The Mobile Computer Project/LE Technology is reaching the end of its first year; to date they have issued over 300 laptop computers to field patrol officers. The field services section worked with the office of technology to develop a "Super Query" that automatically searches 7 different FWC databases simultaneously; this allows field personnel and duty officers to search these different databases by only entering the search criteria once. They also worked

with GIS staff to create area specific Google Earth maps that show FWC managed property boundaries, boat ramps, FWC facilities, artificial reefs, water way markers and other associated map data. These new maps will allow the field officer, using their new laptops; to have a custom built map application to use while on patrol.

Alabama – C. Blankenship reported that enforcement section has been busy checking IFQ Red Snapper Boats landing in Alabama. The three hour notification system has continued to improve. The MRD recently completed a voluntary gill net license surrender program. Forty-seven gill net fishermen surrendered their license for payments totaling \$2.12M. This represents 34% of the fishermen eligible for the program. These fishermen accounted for 40% of dockside values of finfish landed with gill nets in FY2008. A regulation has been approved by the Conservation Advisory Board that would bring Alabama's saltwater fish, creel, bag, possession, and size limits in line with federal regulations concerning the size limit for commercial red grouper, and the size limit for recreational bonnet head sharks. This regulation would also remove the size limit for commercial sharks. A regulation was approved that would require that all fish be landed with head and fins intact, regardless of where they were taken. Sharks, swordfish and tuna can be landed in the form allowed by federal regulations. A regulation was also approved that would better define the public access areas and would better regulation activity in these areas.

Mississippi – W. Chatagner reported that thanks to the JEA program Mississippi received their new 48' boat appropriately named "The Mississippi". The enforcement section is down two people and they currently have a temporary hiring freeze. A snapper case was brought before the DMR Commissioner and two fishermen received a \$2,000 fine. **W. Chatagner** also reported that the Mississippi Legislature is in session.

Louisiana – J. Mayne reported that the total number of field agents, largely due to funding reductions, has declined in recent years and is expected to decline to 236 in FY2008/2009. The LDWF academy graduated 22 agents in FY2007/2008. The LDWF/LED conducted 314,475 patrol house in FY 2007/2008; 187,320 on land and 137,155 on the water. Agents made 659,046 contacts with the public, the majority of who were in compliance with state and federal wildlife fisheries regulations. Agents issued 15,471 criminal citations and 3,946 warnings during this period.

Texas – Texas gave their report to LEAP.

USFWS – There was no representative from USFWS.

NOAA General Counsel – K. Raine gave a quick recap of FY2008. There were 172 NOVAS (some with multiple counts), 105 Magnuson Stevens Act, 47 marine sanctuaries, 17 ESA, 4 Lacy Act and 2 MMPA. Two cases were forfeiture only. In the first quarter of 2009 there have been 27 NOVAS.

USCG – C. DeGeorge reported that he has been sharing Coast Guard intel with LEC members via email and hopes that the members will find the information helpful, if not please let him now and he will remove you from his email list. The Coast Guard is currently working closely with

Texas on some border cases and Texas shrimp closure. **C. DeGeorge** reported that the Coast Guard has found VMS has been very helpful. The Pepperball Program is now operational and he will give us future updates on the success of this program. A Coast Guard large cutter is due to arrive in Louisiana sometime in May.

T. Dunn reported that NOAA has had some nice cooperative cases and they are overall very happy with the JEA program.

Funding for Public Service Announcements

J. Mayne requested that all states forward him any photos or video so that he can update the JEA Program video.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

APPROVED BY:

Joseph W. Smith
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Oct 13, 2009

**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 59th Annual Spring Meeting
Tuesday, March 17, 2009
New Orleans, Louisiana**

J. Smith called the meeting to order at 8:29 a.m. with the following in attendance:

Members

Ron Lukens, Omega Protein, Inc., Gainesville, FL
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Joe Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Rick Schillaci, Omega Protein, Inc., Moss Point, MS

Others

Ed Swindell, Menhaden Advisory Council, Hammond, LA
Ben Landry, Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA
Kimberly Thibodeaux, Omega Protein, Inc. Baton Rouge, LA
Clinton Scheynayder, Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA
John Mareska, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Tony Reisinger, TX Sea Grant,
Rusty Gaude, LA Sea Grant, Baton Rouge, LA
Guy Davenport, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Tommy Williams, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA
Aaron Viles, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Read Hendon, Gulf Coast Research Lab, Ocean Springs, MS
Matt Hill, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Buck Buchanan, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, MRFSS Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS

Introductions

Chairman Smith led the introductions of the MAC.

Approval of Agenda

B. Wallace asked to add an item before other business on Ecosystem Management and the ECOSIM model from the Walters et al. 2008 paper entitled *An ECOSIM Model for Exploring*

Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Management Options: Implications of Including Multistanza Life history Models for Policy Predictions. **J. Smith** also requested a follow-up item from last year be added regarding the hypoxia issue and that **J. Rester** would have a brief presentation with some of the CDFR data from 2007. **W. Perret** moved to adopt the modified agenda and the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes (October 14, 2008)

B. Wallace moved to accept the minutes as written, **R. Lukens** seconded and the motion carried.

Review of the 2008 Gulf Menhaden Season and Forecast for 2009

J. Smith reported that the total Gulf menhaden reduction landings in 2008 were 425,442 metric tons which was down from 2007 by 6% and 9% from the previous 5-yr average. The companies had trouble finding crews again this year and restricted their activity in Texas waters as the TPWD was observing their catch and fishing effort in anticipation of the 'cap' which will start this year. Generally, the season started with good catches and good oil yields early into May, but wind and rain reduced effort into the first of June. June and July saw good catches until the Mississippi River was closed in late July due to a tanker-fuel barge collision which closed access to the river for Daybrook for several days. Also, in late July, Hurricane Dolly made landfall near Brownsville and reduced fishing time in the northern Gulf. August landings were good until TS Faye came through in mid-July bringing lots of rain. September was the worst month for fishing as Hurricane Gustav made landfall in the Morgan City-Houma area causing some flooding and power outages at the reduction plants. Hurricane Ike made landfall in Galveston on September 13. Ike caused major flooding at the Cameron and Abbeville plants and Cameron closed for the remainder of season while Abbeville made repairs. The Daybrook plant in Empire was without power as a result of the storms, but didn't flood although access by employees from New Orleans was hampered by a levee breach. In late September, the Cameron vessels re-deployed to Abbeville and Moss Point and fishing was good off the central Louisiana coast through the end of the season.

In 2008, 41 vessels participated in the reduction fishery, 39 regular steamers (2 fished infrequently), and 2 run boats with a nominal fishing effort of 355,800 vessel ton weeks which was down 4% from 2007 and the second lowest effort since 1965. **J. Smith** reported that he anticipates 4 factories being open in 2009 with 41 vessels (38 steamers and 3 run boats). Based on historical performance of the vessels in the 2009 fleet, he estimates nominal fishing effort of about 355,000 vessel ton weeks in 2009 resulting in a landings forecast for 2009 of 443,000 metric tons.

Update on the Atlantic Menhaden Fishery

J. Smith also provided an update on the 2008 Atlantic menhaden season. Omega's Reedville plant fished 10 vessels in 2008 for reduction and landed 141,133 metric tons. In addition, there were 3 bait vessels in Virginia, 5-6 in New Jersey, and 2 in Rhode Island and Maine. The reduction landings were down 19% from 2007 and 15% from previous 5-yr average. There was

no lack of fish this year on the Atlantic, but the fishery had persistent plant problems throughout season and placed some of the boats on weekly quotas. Of note, 2008 marked the 4th consecutive summer that adult Atlantic menhaden were abundant in southern New England waters and fish were available throughout Rhode Island and as far north as Portland, Maine. Also of note, 2008 was 3rd year for Chesapeake Bay 'Cap' which limited the reduction landings from Chesapeake Bay to 109,000 metric tons per year for five years with allowances for overages and underages. For the third year in a row, the removals were considerably under the 'Cap'. Allowing for last year's underage, the 'Cap' for 2009 is about 122,000 metric tons.

The ASMFC's Atlantic Menhaden Management Board had a number of notable actions since the last MAC meeting in October 2008. Some managers and NGO's voiced concern over the 'Cap' expiring in 2010 and requested the Board appoint a working group to establish 'ecological reference points' to manage the fishery after the expiration. The ASMFC staff is developing ideas for this working group and will be working on identifying the technical expertise requirements for the group. **Doug Vaughan** will be conducting the 2009 'Peer-Reviewed' stock assessment for Atlantic menhaden through the SEDAR program with the Data Workshop scheduled for May, the Assessment Workshop in October, and the Peer-Review in March of 2010. Finally, Maryland Sea Grant has taken lead in developing Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management Plans in Chesapeake Bay and identified five key species for inclusion: oysters, blue crab, river herrings, striped bass, and Atlantic menhaden. As part of this process, biological background development teams have been appointed for each species in anticipation of the modelers data needs. **Doug Vaughan** and **J. Smith** are serving on the menhaden team and are developing background briefs which include information on biology, habitat, previous stock assessment, food web, and socioeconomics. The briefs should be completed by May and the Quantitative Ecosystem Teams (modelers) will develop ecosystem-based reference points and control rules based on the recommendations of the Species Teams.

Louisiana Forecast for 2009

V. Guillory provided the Louisiana forecast for 2009 which is based on several environmental variables such as water temperature and salinity in the winter at Grand Isle, the Mississippi River discharge, and southeast LA rainfall. Biological variables that go into the analysis include juvenile menhaden catch in LDWF fishery-independent trawls and industry fishing effort. Guillory noted that the March river discharge in 2008 was high at 749,000 cfs, winter rainfall was moderate as were the March salinities at Grand Isle. Generally, a "cold and dry" winter is favorable for recruitment and a "warm and wet" winter is not. The 2007-2008 winters were wet and cool. **V. Guillory** forecasts the landings in Louisiana will be between 414,000 and 424,000 metric tons in 2009 which is just below the 10-year mean of 424,000 metric tons.

Louisiana Trip Tickets and the CDFRs

R. Lukens briefed everyone on the action from the last meeting regarding apparent discrepancies between the NOAA data from the CDFRs and the Louisiana Trip Tickets. **R. Lukens** talked with **J. Smith** and Michelle Kasprzak (LDWF) and it was determined that one plant was not reporting their actual pump-outs, but rather were providing the Captains estimates. The problem

has been addressed at Omega and both **J. Smith** and the Department would work together to cross check the data on a more regular basis.

Implementation/Monitoring of the Texas 'Cap' in 2009

J. Mambretti reported on the preliminary effort to track the Texas landings in 2008 in preparation for the 2009 full implementation of the Texas 'Cap'. The Cameron plant had been consistently providing TPWD with their landings estimate from the CDFRs and **J. Smith** can provide the corrected data which are adjusted from the actual pump outs. In 2009, the industry would include additional TPWD staff in their weekly data e-mail as a back up to **J. Mambretti** in the event of a storm or other unexpected computer event within the TPWD.

SEAMAP Menhaden Recruitment Index Survey

R. Lukens also reported to the committee on the actions from the SEAMAP Subcommittee related to the request from the MAC to begin looking into directed sampling for menhaden recruitment. The Subcommittee agreed to put together a working group to review the original 1970s survey. Several members of the MAC were recommended as possible work group members. The existing SEAMAP surveys and gear aren't designed to sample juvenile menhaden for a recruitment index, so the survey would need to be directed in the near-shore, coastal areas and rivers. A webinar would be held by Rester to discuss the details of a survey design and to develop a cost estimate for the October SEAMAP Subcommittee meeting.

CDFR Scan-Able Forms

J. Smith provided a brief synopsis of the test run for the new Scan-Able CDFR forms. **J. Smith** placed the forms on 8 Gulf boats and 2 Atlantic boats last season with excellent results. He has the new forms printed and is ready to distribute them within the next two weeks. The old forms cost \$0.14 per unit while the new forms only cost \$0.06. In addition, the time to enter the data will be significantly shorter which is critical since NOAA is tracking the Chesapeake Cap and the helping with the Texas Cap monitoring.

Hypoxia and Fishing Effort

J. Rester provided a short presentation on hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico and the reduction fishery activities. The best data available to examine hypoxia was the detailed menhaden set data from the 2007 CDFRs; 2008 has not been completely key-punched. **J. Rester** plotted the 'dead zone' against where the fishery was making sets in 2007 to see if and where they overlapped. **B. Wallace** pointed out that although the effort seems to be directed outside the edges of the hypoxic areas, it was his recollection that Daybrook used to fish more to the west in areas that are now more impacted by hypoxia. It's hard to determine if this represents a natural change in the distribution of menhaden or if it is a result of hypoxia impinging on their normal habitat. **J. Rester** will continue to work with **J. Smith** and the electronic CDFR data to evaluate the extent and impact of the 'dead zone' on annual fishing activities and patterns of net sets. He will provide another review to the MAC in the future.

Ecosystem Management

B. Wallace noted that since this topic was covered in several discussions, the MAC disregard the new agenda item.

Other Business

It was suggested by **R. Lukens** that the GSMFC menhaden website be reviewed by the MAC periodically for content. **J. Smith** suggested that the landings should be updated and all agreed there may be a utility in including a page on eco-system management in the Gulf and what models are available in the literature on the topic.

Finally, **W. Perret** reported that he would be officially retiring from the MDMR in June and that **Mike "Buck" Buchanan** would be replacing him on the MAC. He thanked everyone for 45 good years and received a standing ovation.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

**SEA GRANT – FISHERIES EXTENSION ADVISORY PANEL
MINUTES – 59th Annual Spring Meeting
Tuesday, March 17, 2009
New Orleans, Louisiana**

Members Present

Dr. Chuck Adams
Tony Reisinger
Rex Caffey
Glenn Thomas
Gary Graham

Guests

Logan Respass
Dustin Ridener
Judy Jamison
Joe Shepard
Rusty Gaudé
Debbie Batiste
Linda Guidry
Joseph Smith
Mark Schexnayder
David Mcinney
Ben Landry
Ron Lukens
Robert Fritchey

Chairman Gary Graham called the meeting to order and introductions were made. The agenda was approved. The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed and an error corrected in Tony Reisinger's presentation regarding mercury data. The minutes were then approved. Graham indicated that Dave Burrage, Mississippi Sea Grant, had sent a note explaining that his health would not allow him to attend this meeting. Dr. Chuck Adams explained that Brian Cameron, formerly with Florida Sea Grant, would no longer be on the committee as he had accepted a position with the Mineral Management Service. Chuck stated that a replacement for that committee position would be in place the next time we met.

Ron Lukens, Senior Biologist, Omega Protein Corporation gave an overview of management considerations in the Gulf menhaden industry. He stated that voluntary no fishing took place on young, first year fish and that the industry closed their fishing from November 1 until the third Monday in April. Lukens indicated that all states have some prohibition in seining in the Gulf of Mexico. Lukens pointed out that critics are quick to state that there is no cap on the take of menhaden so that the resource can or is fished beyond MSY. He indicated that stock assessment scientists say that high fecundity within the species makes it unnecessary to enact a total allowable catch. He pointed out that weather and other factors also hampered the seasonal take of the fish and that the stocks are not overfished. Lukens noted that a National Marine Fisheries

Service stock assessment was published in 2007 utilizing data from 2004 and no concern for overfishing was noted. It was pointed out that another stock assessment would occur in 2012.

Lukens indicated that his industry agreed that a single species assessment does not account for ecological considerations. He said that the industry is open to ecosystem management for menhaden, but that a model for this has not been refined. He presented data that showed that about 20 percent of the stock is annually harvested.

Lukens stressed that a huge misconception existed regarding the relationship of menhaden and water quality. Many lay people have believed that menhaden clean the water of phytoplankton and have a positive effect on water quality. He referred to a number of studies that contradict this perception. Among these were references to the brachial basket of menhaden which are used for filtration. This basket is actually too large to capture phytoplankton and is clearly adequate to take zooplankton. Studies were cited regarding bioenergetics where it was proven that menhaden must consume something other than phytoplankton for energy needs and that zooplankton provided the necessary nutrients. Additionally, he pointed out that stable isotope studies showed that zooplankton were the important component of diet and that a similar study was now being conducted in the Gulf. Finally, Dr. Lukens related studies that were performed regarding chlorophyll tank feeding and that these further provided evidence that phytoplankton is not the primary component in menhaden diet.

Another emotional issue regarding the menhaden industry relates to the importance of menhaden as a forage fish and the impacts of harvest. A number of different studies were discussed in the presentation. One study showed that in gut samples of various predator fish, 65 percent did not have menhaden. It was noted that a few fish were found that had huge quantities of menhaden in their stomachs. Lukens indicated that predators are opportunistic feeders and that there definitely were incidents where predators were in a school of menhaden and consumed significant quantities of the forage fish. Examples of various quantities of menhaden which existed in gut analysis were given. For example, Atlantic striped bass were shown to have 8 percent by weight of menhaden in their diet.

Lukens stated that the loss of young of the year menhaden from natural mortality is very high and is estimated to be about 70 percent.

Lukens stated that another important issue relating to the menhaden industry is bycatch. Again, a number of scientific studies were cited and data summarized. These data did not show high numbers of other species taken in menhaden purse seines. It was noted that NMFS assigns a bycatch estimate of less than 1 percent by weight to the menhaden fishery. He stated that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Menhaden Technical Committee reports that bycatch is not a problem with the fishery. Lukens indicated that the 2002 Shark Assessment showed very little impact from the menhaden fishery. He closed his presentation by saying that he would travel and meet with other groups to discuss concerns regarding menhaden.

The committee agenda then redirected presentations and discussion to shrimp gear. The committee offered an excellent forum for the exchange of ideas and information regarding the planned Louisiana Gear Enhancement Program. As a lead-in to this, Graham was asked to

discuss ongoing efforts in Texas Sea Grant with fuel efficiency investigations utilizing new trawl doors and netting. Graham indicated that they were in the process of collecting and analyzing data on the doors and webbing from 14 boats that had been rigged out by his program. One of these boats is located in Louisiana. He indicated that Mike Haby was collaborating with him in this program and that he had analyzed data from 8 vessels thus far. Graham presented a power point presentation of the project and showed that a 20 – 24 percent fuel savings was being realized on most of the vessels that they had evaluated. One vessel which seemed to be an outlier had only achieved a 10 percent fuel savings. Given that Gulf vessels burn on the average of at least 50,000 gallons of fuel annually, it is clear that this project is yielding outstanding potential for fuel savings. He indicated that although the project is not complete, over 120 Brownsville vessels have converted to the new gear. Graham showed that some vessels were achieving about one gallon of fuel per hour utilizing sapphire netting. He stated that with the webbing, the need for net preservative was obviated and this alone can save as much as \$500 per year per trawl. In addition to overall fuel savings, the cambered doors provide less wear and tear on the main engine because rpm is reduced. Additionally, fewer oil changes are necessary. Some ecological benefits are perceived such as less carbon emission and a smaller footprint on the seafloor because the doors are about half the size of tradition gears.

The Louisiana contingency then entered into a discussion regarding implementation of a Gear Enhancement Program. Mark Schexnayder with the Louisiana Sea Grant Program took leadership in coordinating this portion of the program. Kris Van Orsdel, Director of the Governor's Office of Infrastructure Policy gave an overview of potential plans to fund a number of projects for the fishing industry. Although not yet determined, he indicated that there may be \$7-15 million dollars made available to industry. A broad range of ideas, to include investment into onboard advanced refrigeration systems and preservation systems, were discussed. Discussions focused on the cambered trawl doors and sapphire webbing being introduced in Texas and many believed that a similar effort would be appropriate for Louisiana. Discussion from Koyel Mandel included economic analysis of some the costs and returns of the new gear. All agreed that a very exciting opportunity for Louisiana fisheries exists through the new program.

Updates were received from Chuck Adams in Florida. He indicated that longtime Sea Grant Agent, Don Sweat, had recently retired. He then discussed a project on product integrity of grouper in which he is collaborating with Dr. Steve Otwell. He stated that approximate 400 interviews were about to be conducted regarding consumer perception of grouper mislabeling. He pointed out that this project was being funded by the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation.

Dr. Adams indicated that socioeconomic investigations regarding for-hire and recreational usage of artificial reef structures were continuing. He stated that this project should be completed this fall.

Dr. Adams discussed efforts to put together a panel in October for the Seafood Science and Technology Conference. This panel would participate in a session to discuss applied research within the fisheries. Dr. Steve Otwell is very active in this conference and Dr. Adams will be working with him to organize this session.

Discussions focused upon the next Sea Grant Extension Fisheries Advisory meeting with the Commission and potential focal points. The group suggested and agreed that we will attempt to direct this meeting to algal blooms if a much more pressing issue does not surface.

Graham indicated that the committee was designed to rotate among members of the Sea Grant community and that he was going to discuss with his administrator, Logan Respass, which direction Texas wanted to take in the future for new members, etc. Graham indicated that he would chair the next meeting and then it would be time to select another chairman for the group.

The meeting was adjourned.

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 59th Annual Spring Meeting
Tuesday, March 17, 2009
New Orleans, Louisiana**

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
Brian Lezina, LDWF, Lacombe, LA
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Chris Denson, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Roy Crabtree, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL

Staff

James Ballard, Sport Fish/Aquatic Invasives Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
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
Ralph Hode, EDRP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, Systems Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Mike Ray, TPWD, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Read Hendon, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Bonnie Ponwith, NOAA Fisheries/SEFSC, Miami, FL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX

Adoption of Agenda

A motion to adopt the agenda as written was made and was passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes as written, for the meeting held on October 14, 2008, was made and passed with no opposition.

State/Federal Reports

Florida Report: V. Vail/R. Cody

The fees for most recreational saltwater fishing licenses increased late last year. For example, the cost of an annual resident license went from \$12 to \$15.50 [includes \$1 for the agent issuing the license], an annual non-resident license from \$30 to \$45.50, a non-resident 7-day license from \$15 to \$28.50. The fees for lifetime, charter/for hire and pier licenses did not increase. The fees for saltwater fishing licenses are now tied to the Consumer Price Index and will be automatically reviewed at five year intervals. The Commission is encouraging the purchase of a saltwater fishing license by persons who either don't fish or are exempt from the requirement to hold a license but want to support conservation and management of marine resources. Anglers purchasing a license are being asked if they would also like to make a donation to support the Commission's Youth Hunting and Fishing Initiative, which will develop programs to get kids fishing and hunting. The Commission is also requesting that the 2009 Legislature repeal the statutory language that exempts resident saltwater anglers fishing from shore or structure affixed to shore from holding a recreational saltwater license.

Almost two years ago the Legislature approved an Economic Analyst position for the FWC Division of Marine Fisheries Management to assist in evaluating impacts of natural or economic disasters on the fishing industry. Efforts to fill the position with a qualified economist were unsuccessful so the position was reclassified to an Environmental Specialist III with the same duties and advertized. An applicant accepted the offer of the position; he will start work in Tallahassee on March 16.

RECENT COMMISSION REGULATORY ACTIONS INCLUDE:

- Approval (December 2008) of amendments to the Commission's reef fish rule that establish a two fish bag and two month closure [February 1 – March 31] for the recreational gag grouper fishery in Florida's Gulf waters, excluding Monroe County. These amendments are consistent with regulations for this grouper in the Gulf federal waters.
- Approval of rule amendments to increase the recreational bag limit of Gulf red grouper from one fish to two per person within a five fish aggregate bag, increase the minimum

size for greater amberjack from 28 to 30 inches, and increase the commercial and recreational size limit on gray triggerfish from 12 to 14 inches.

- With reference to red snapper, in February 2008 the Commission applied the two fish bag limit in effect for federal waters to state waters but, at the urging of Panhandle stakeholders, retained the April 1 – October 31 state fishing season. In December 2008 stakeholders requested that the Commission reconsider implementing the shorter fishing season of June 1 – September 30 to be consistent with the red snapper season in adjacent federal waters. In February 2009 the Commission established the four month red snapper season for state waters of the Gulf.
- Approval (February 2009) of revisions to the Marine Life rules, which regulate harvest of marine fish, invertebrates and plants for the aquarium trade. Ten species, one genus and two families were added to the list of designated Marine Life organisms (bringing the total to well over 600 species that are defined as Marine Life species), size limits for some species were revised [e.g., a 12” maximum length for parrotfish], a limit of five specimens of a species within an aggregate bag limit of 20 specimens was established for the recreational marine life fishery, and daily possession or vessel limits were established for other species [e.g., bag limits of 400 each for dwarf seahorses and emerald crabs; the bag limit for *Condylactis* anemones was reduced from 400 to 200]. These revisions were based on recommendations from an advisory board comprised of commercial and recreational representatives and subsequent input from the public. [Note: a Tiered Marine Life endorsement and Restricted Species endorsement on the commercial fishing license are required for harvest and sale of those saltwater organisms designated as “restricted Marine Life species”. Non-designated species may be harvested and sold with only a commercial Saltwater Products License. The number of Tiered Marine Life endorsements that may be issued is currently capped at less than 200.]
- Repeal (February 2009) of the moratorium on reduction of the number spiny lobster traps that could be used in the fishery, which had been in place since 2003. The number of traps a fisher can use is governed by the number of trap certificates the person holds; the trap certificates are transferable at “market price”. At the time of transfer there will be a 10% reduction in the number of certificates transferred if the transfer is to someone other than an immediate family member [i.e., a seller transfers 100 certificates, the buyer receives 90]. Reduction will cease when a base of 400,000 traps is reached.
- Approved a rule defining the process for assessment of administrative penalties authorized in statute for specified violations of blue crab regulations.
- Established six ten day regional closures for the blue crab fishery during which time traps and trap debris left in the water will be retrieved by Commission staff, commercial blue crabbers, and volunteer coastal clean-up organizations.

The eight year saga of the *General Hoyt S. Vandenberg*, 520 ft. former missile tracking ship, continues. Last June the Norfolk shipyard filed a Motion for Interlocutory Sale of the vessel to recover the increasing cost of storage. In November a federal court authorized the sale to recover

\$1.6 million in overdue bills. In mid-December the First State Bank of the Florida Keys purchased the vessel for \$1.36 million at a public auction on behalf of the City of Key West. The Court authorized transfer of the vessel title to the City in February 2009 and the vessel has been moved from the shipyard to a contractor's site for the final clean up and preparation for the tow to Key West later this month. Deployment will occur sometime in May (it must occur before hurricane season). Anticipated total cost for preparation and deployment of this vessel is nearly \$8 million with \$4 million provided through Monroe County, \$1.6 million from the Governor through the Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development, \$1.2 million from MARAD, and \$1 million from the FWC Artificial Reef Program.

FISH AND WILDLIFE RESEARCH INSTITUTE:

A total of 160,275 trip tickets were edited (as of Jan 31, 2009) of which 52% were submitted electronically. Those tickets accounted for a total of 355,943 species records, of which almost 59% were from electronic submissions. The numbers of records is expected to increase as final edits are completed. Currently, the method employed to determine the number of electronic records involves matching batch numbers against a list of dealers known to submit electronically and obtaining counts for those records. At previous GSMFC meetings, the possibility of tagging records for more user-friendly data querying was discussed. We have begun the process of adding a variable to the Trip Ticket data program that would allow identification of electronic records without the need for cross-referencing with trip-ticket batch numbers. However, the addition of the variable has proved more complex than first anticipated. Table structure and associated work files are impacted. Currently, Steve Brown is working with IT staff to refine procedures for data loading, batch promotions and errata extracts. The process is expected to take a couple of weeks to complete.

The number of measurements per trip interviews has been declining in recent years. The number of measurements per interview for 2008 was approximately half that for 2004. Possible reasons for the decline include, sampler turnover (staffing problems in remote locations), reluctance of dealers to allow handling, and decreasing landings for some species measured.

All marine recreational fishing statistics survey quotas for shore, private/rental and charter mode fishing were met or exceeded for 2008. Final totals for angler intercepts for shore, private boat and charter modes are expected to be available in April, 2009. A total of 18,275 biological samples were collected by recreational and commercial samplers. The move to the FIN biological data program is progressing. However, the need to maintain an auxiliary database remains. The metadata link to GSMFC currently being developed should allow access to information collected that falls outside the scope of the FIN database.

Also on the recreational side, the survey instrument for the online logbook funded through the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program II has been completed. For-Hire vessel operators in Florida Panhandle counties (Escambia-Bay counties) as well as South Florida counties (Lee, Collier and Monroe) are eligible to participate in the survey. The survey will be used to assess the current status of the fishery impacted in the 2005 hurricane season.

Alabama Report: C. Denson

BIOLOGICAL SECTION

- Alabama Marine Resources (AMRD) distributed just under \$6.4 million to Alabama seafood related business as part of EDRP II. A total of 64 Alabama seafood related businesses who submitted applications to AMRD received a onetime payment equal to 15% of their reviewed physical, inventory and sales losses.
- AMRD continues the first and second rounds of commercial and for-hire fishermen data sheets as part of EDRP. Commercial participants have submitted \$28,400 of data sheets for the first round and \$351,400 for the second round since January 2009. Commercial program totals are \$2,885,200 for the first round and \$553,200 for the second round. For-hire vessel owners have submitted data sheets in the amounts of \$600 for round one and \$106,800 for round two allocations in January 2009. For-hire program totals are \$870,200 for the first round and \$248,200 for the second round through January 2009.
- AMRD distributed monies to commercial gillnet fishermen that opted to participate in a buyout program prompted by CCA driven legislation. Enrollment into the program ended on March 2, 2009. Out of 140 eligible fishermen, 47 (34%) retired their licenses under the program at the cost of \$2.12 million. These fishermen contributed to 40% of Alabama's 2008 gill net landings. Monetary compensation was determined using landings values reported through Alabama's commercial trip ticket program. In accordance with Section 4 of Alabama Act No. 2008-467, fishermen whose three year (2005-2007) annual sum was less than \$4,999.99 were eligible for a one-time payment of \$6,000.00. Fishermen whose three year (2005-2007) annual sum was greater than \$5,000.00 but less than \$19,999.99 were eligible for a one-time payment of 200% of their single highest year's total dockside values. Fishermen whose three year (2005-2007) annual sum was greater than \$20,000.00 were eligible for a one-time payment of 125% of their single highest year's total dockside values.
- Using Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP) funds, ADCNR/State Lands Division has developed plans to restore approximately 16 acres of marsh along 5000' of eroded shoreline west of the Bayou La Batre ship channel in Mississippi Sound. Sediment will be dredged from nearby areas and planted with appropriate marsh grasses to provide habitat and stabilization. Plans also include the use of wave attenuating devices to protect the new shoreline.
- AMRD is in the planning phase of a second round of data sheets for commercial oystermen. Previously implemented plans had to be modified due to impacts of drought and related oyster drill predation. Oystermen will now be sampling to monitor recovery of previous cultch planting efforts. This sampling is scheduled to begin by the end of March.
- AMRD worked with the department of health to sample oyster reefs in the western portion of Mobile Bay from Fowl River to the Arlington Channel for pesticides, PCB's and other deleterious substances currently classified as prohibited per FDA guidelines as part of a potential relay project for recovery of the oyster reefs.

- AMRD staff continues to work with other Department of Conservation personnel in the development of a plan to reef the damaged Gulf State Park Pier. AMRD will create artificial reefs from materials recovered from the demolition of the old pier and pre-fabricated concrete pyramid reefs. These reefs will be placed offshore and within a 300 foot no boating zone around the new pier to enhance fishing opportunities of pier fishermen. Work is scheduled to begin in March 2009.
- Staff from AMRD held a meeting with members of the United States Army Corps of Engineers - Mobile District office to discuss the offshore artificial reef program administered by AMRD through a permit issued by the USACE-Mobile office. It was held to familiarize new USACE staff on the history of artificial reef construction off Alabama and the permitting process as well as changes made to the reef construction protocol and approved materials list. This information was provided to address specific questions USACE – Mobile staff had about Alabama’s artificial reef program as part of an internal review process regarding reef building activities within the Gulf of Mexico.
- AMRD staff collected biological information from 27 species of fish in 2008 and 1,295 otoliths. It is anticipated all otoliths will be processed, aged, and entered into an electronic database for submission to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission prior to 1 April 2009. AMRD staff has begun to use the new web-based data entry program for otoliths collected in 2009 and will work with GSMFC staff to work out any possible glitches in the program.
- In 2008, AMRD staff collected 2,602 recreational angler interviews as part of the Marine Recreational Information Program. All National Marine Fisheries Service wave quotas were met except shore mode in Wave 6 and private/rental mode in Waves 1 and 6. AMRD participated in recent MRIP data review meetings.
- AMRD is working with Departmental staff to stop the sale of paper saltwater fishing licenses. Beginning September 1, 2009, it is anticipated that all Alabama saltwater fishing licenses will be issued and stored electronically.
- Steve Heath, AMRD Chief Biologist, retired effective February 28, 2009.
- Mark Van Hoose, AMRD Oyster Biologist, retired effective January 31, 2009.

ENFORCEMENT SECTION

- Major Chris Blankenship has been promoted to the position of Chief Enforcement Officer for the Alabama Marine Resources Division.
- The Enforcement section has been checking IFQ Red Snapper Boats landing in Alabama. The three hour notification system has continued to improve. At this point officers are inspecting the majority of the IFQ fishermen landing in Alabama.

- The Enforcement Section's public outreach efforts have continued with numerous meetings with commercial and recreational fishermen and participation in the Mobile Boat Show.
- All Alabama Marine Resources officers received ruggedized laptop computers for use in their vehicles and vessels. These computers will be used for NCIC checks, instant notification of complaints, weekly and daily reports, and other needs. The Marine Resources Division is currently working with the University of Alabama and the Administrative Office of Courts to develop an e-citation program.
- A regulation has been approved by the Conservation Advisory Board that would bring our current "Saltwater Fish, Creel, Bag, Possession, and Size Limits" in line with federal regulations concerning the size limit for commercial red grouper, and the size limit for recreational bonnet head sharks. This regulation would also remove the size limit for commercial sharks. This regulation would bring the creel limits for bonnet head sharks and recreational grouper in line with changes made to the federal regulations.
- A regulation has been approved by the Conservation Advisory Board that would require that all fish be landed with head and fins intact, regardless of where they were taken. Sharks, swordfish and tuna can be landed in the form allowed by federal regulations.
- A regulation has been approved by the Conservation Advisory Board that would make changes to the "Use of Gill Nets and Harvest of Mullet" regulation. This regulation would make it illegal to display an invalid gill net placard, close certain areas to the use of gill nets, require all gill nets and seines to have floats at no greater than prescribed intervals, and prohibit the possession of recreational gill nets more than 300 feet from shore.
- A regulation has been approved by the Conservation Advisory Board that would better define the public access areas and would better regulate the activity in these areas.

Mississippi Report: K. Cuevas

The Office of Marine Patrol, Marine Law Enforcement activities for October 2008 – February 2009 consisted of 689 sea hours with 627 contacts which resulted in 25 total citations. These citations mostly consisted of violations concerning red snapper and sharks.

Shrimp season closed at midnight, December 31, 2008 except south of the Intracoastal Waterway. All state waters will close to shrimping activities except live bait shrimping at midnight, April 30, 2009. 2008 landings of 4.6 million lbs. (headless) are down from Pre-Katrina levels.

The EDRP II Shrimp Fishery Monitoring Program accepted trip tickets through October 15 2008. A total of 6281 fishery tickets were submitted by over 300 resident shrimpers who provided detailed harvest information; these fishermen have been paid approximately \$2.4 million. Data compilation and analysis is on-going. Four Shrimp EDRP wire fraud cases

(falsification of trip tickets) have resulted in guilty pleas and restitution ordered (\$36,340 total). Two additional cases are on-going.

A crab trap closed season and volunteer derelict trap cleanup will not be held in 2009. However, staff has continued to monitor efforts for derelict traps by side scan sonar detection and has picked up 154 lost traps. Since 1999, the MS Derelict Crab Trap Cleanup has yielded over 17,000 derelict crab traps recovered and recycled, with over 12,000 of those traps being recovered by storm-affected commercial fishermen participating in EDRP programs. The cleanup has been a cooperative effort of MS commercial fishermen, MDMR, and Gulf Coast Research Lab (GCRL). For these efforts the MS program has been awarded a First Place 2008 EPA Gulf of Mexico Program Gulf Guardian Award, which was presented at the EPA Partnerships in Action 20th Anniversary Celebration, October 29 in New Orleans.

The DMR Shrimp & Crab Bureau is partnering with the MS Gulf Coast National Heritage Area (MGCNHA) and MS-AL Sea Grant Consortium to record oral histories as an educational video to tell the story of Mississippi's seafood industry. On-going interviews of local fishing community icons began November 3, 2008. The video should be available for distribution sometime in May 2009.

The MS Crab Task Force continues to work with the Gulf Regional Diamondback Terrapin Work Group to address incidental terrapin catch in crab traps and is now voluntarily installing TEDs in their traps (2300+ to date). DMR staff has worked cooperatively with both groups to encourage trap TED use and help with installation. Additionally, outreach to MS recreational crabbers and trap builders has resulted in 350 TEDs being placed in crab traps.

The DMR Real-Time Hydrological Monitoring Program has rebuilt two historically important Western Sound stations (lost in Katrina) used specifically in monitor conditions around productive oyster reefs. Data from all twelve stations can be found at www.dmr.ms.gov.

On February 20, DMR and partners held the second in a series of seminars with the goal of enhancing familiarity between interested groups and increasing awareness of the programs, needs and opportunities that are relevant to marine research in Mississippi waters. "Hypoxia in the Mississippi Bight" was the subject of the seminar. The first seminar, "Managing Mississippi's Oyster Resource & Associated Monitoring" was held November 7. Attendance at both seminars was excellent.

The Mississippi's Artificial Reef Program is currently working with the Hancock County Port and Harbor Commission on a staging site in Hancock County for the old Highway 90 Bridge rubble. This material will be stored, crushed, loaded, and barged out from this site to artificial reef sites for future deployments.

The Artificial Reef Bureau has also been working with local contractor's to get donated concrete material (concrete culverts, concrete rubble, and concrete light pole anchors) delivered to the Gulfport Staging Site. There were 3 steel hull vessels and 160 Reef Balls deployed during this time frame in reef sites south of both Horn and Ship Island. These vessels were donated by the U.S. Coast Guard. A local contractor was hired to clean and deploy these vessels.

The 2009 site plans for inshore reef construction is complete. The creation and enhancing of 18 inshore reefs sites thought out the 3 coastal counties will be done with the use of 21,000 tons of crushed concrete.

The Mississippi Artificial Reef Rigs to Reef Program is currently working with a petroleum industry representative on a project in the main pass area south of Mississippi. Reef permits were obtained and the deployment should begin in early summer.

There are 56 charter boat operators under contract in the EDRP II program. Captains turned in reports on a monthly basis through January 2009. There have been 1525 fisheries recovery reports submitted under the EDRP II program. Data is being scanned into a database and checked for errors. Some preliminary analysis has been conducted on the 4828 fisheries recovery reports received in the EDRP I program which concluded in May of 2008.

Fifty commercial fishermen have signed contracts to participate in fisheries recovery monitoring under the EDRP II program, which began March 15, 2008. As of January 31, 2009, 996 commercial finfish fishermen trips have been reported. The commercial fisheries recovery report program is ongoing with EDRP II funds.

New recreational fishing records:

Conventional Tackle

Bank Seabass: 9.6 oz

Ladyfish: 3lbs 9.28 oz

Fly Fishing Tackle

Florida Pompano: 3lbs 12.8 oz

Oyster Season began Sept 25th 2008. Through February 14th, 2009, **313,622** sacks of oysters have been harvested from **13,167** boat trips.

An Oyster Stewardship Program meeting was held on October 15, 2008 at the MDMR Bolton Building with Mississippi dealers and processors. 5dealers/processors and 7 staff were in attendance. Items on the agenda that were discussed were the 2008 oyster season update, restoration activities, and changes in FDA *V.p/V.v* regulations, experimental harvest limits and a moratorium in license sales. On October 21, 2008 the Oyster Stewardship meeting was held at the GCRL. 36 Mississippi oyster harvesters were in attendance as well as 8 MDMR staff and 2 MDMR marine patrol officers. Agenda items covered were similar to those discussed at the dealer/processor meetings.

The Oyster Stewardship Program Harvesters meeting was held January 13, 2009 at the West Harrison County Civic Center. 69 harvesters and 8 staff attended. Robert Ricks did a presentation on at home weather stations. Items discussed were issues concerning the Mississippi oyster industry. DMR Personnel continues to monitor and assess the oyster resources by taking oyster samples by dredges and mapping areas using GPS and ArcMap GIS software. MDMR staff is working on setting up the Gulf and South Atlantic Shellfish Conference in April.

Louisiana Report: B. Lezina

ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRUCTURING

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Office of Fisheries is undergoing a restructuring activity to improve efficiency. In that regard, the Research and Assessment Division has been created to house common functions of the Inland and Marine Fisheries Divisions as well as to consolidate state-wide programs. The new Division will also be the center for public outreach and access activities for the Office.

HURRICANE RECOVERY

The LDWF continues to oversee the disbursement of fisheries related aid funding following the hurricanes of 2005. To date approximately \$12 million of the \$22 million dedicated to public and private oyster fisheries (EDRP 1) has been spent. This includes monies used for the Private Oyster Lease Rehabilitation (POLR) Program and the planting of cultch on the Public Oyster Seed Grounds. The POLR program will continue through June 2009 and has reimbursed over \$7.9 million to participating oyster leaseholders for rehabilitation activities. To date cultch planting projects have been conducted in Breton Sound, Mississippi Sound and Hackberry Bay in the Barataria Bay system. Water bottom assessments in anticipation of cultch planting have been conducted in St Bernard Parish, Calcasieu Lake, and Sabine Lake. Four cultch planting projects are scheduled for May 2009 utilizing Hurricane Katrina/Rita disaster funds: 1) Mississippi Sound, 2) Black Bay, 3) Lake Chien, and 4) Sister Lake. An additional cultch planting project is scheduled for Calcasieu Lake, but will be accomplished utilizing state funding to compensate for oil and gas impacts to oyster resources in the Lake.

Debris removal efforts continue throughout coastal Louisiana focusing on the fishing grounds. Four hundred square miles of coastal waterbottoms in Breton Sound, Lake Pontchartrain Middle Grounds, Lake St Catherine, Calcasieu Lake and Vermilion/Cote Blanche Bays have been cleaned of debris through the Department's contract with Crowder-Gulf Joint Venture. The LDWF has recently assigned Crowder Gulf an additional 40 square miles of waterbottoms to be cleaned. These waters are located in southern Caminada and Barataria Bays north of Grand Isle. LDWF continues to work with the LA Recovery Authority (LRA), the LA Department of Natural Resources (LDNR), the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP), federal agencies, local parish officials, and community and fishing organizations to identify the locations of underwater obstructions which are fouling the fishing grounds or access channels used by fishing vessels.

Of the \$26.4 million allocated, to date approximately \$23.1 million in direct economic assistance payments has been made to qualified Louisiana resident commercial fishers, commercial fishing vessel license holders in selected fisheries, wholesale/retail dealers, and charterboat fishing guides impacted by Katrina and Rita. The LDWF has scheduled review hearings for those individuals who have challenged their eligibility or qualifying status for the program.

The LDWF has also launched a \$3.5 million program to assist saltwater recreational fisheries. Under this program, 60 marinas were prequalified for assistance. Qualifications include: 1) Must be available to the general public for recreational saltwater fishing activities; 2) Must be listed on the LDWF Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistic Survey (MRFSS) Site Register; 3) Must be privately owned/leased; and, 4) Must allow LDWF biologists to conduct scheduled recreational

surveys at their facility. LDWF developed a score for each eligible facility using the estimated total annual fishing pressure or numbers of recreational anglers using the marina from MRFSS data collected from one year prior to hurricanes Katrina and Rita (September 2004 to August 2005) and the maximum surge heights estimated for the facility from hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. The resulting score was used to determine the amount of economic assistance available for each facility.

In the wake of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the LDWF is anticipating the receipt of Fishery Disaster fund and developing a reimbursement program for commercial fishermen and wholesale/retail dealers. Although still under development, this program will enable the Department to provide assistance to the commercial fishing industry through reimbursement of eligible items.

The Department has identified funds within the first EDRP grant to reprogram into cooperative research to monitor recovery of the fishing industries.

RECENT OPERATIONS

With the passage of legislation, the LDWF is now designing a reporting system for the recreational charter industry. The for-hire reporting will be voluntary and will provide valuable management information. The LDWF is working with the charter captains to design an efficient traditional mail and electronic reporting system.

The Habitat Section continues to work with state and federal partners concerning the myriad of coastal restoration and hurricane protection projects occurring throughout the state. These include several new freshwater introductions, major channel closures, and extensive levee systems. In addition, two outside projects have been funded using EDRP 1 funds; the first concerns the utilization of cultch materials as shoreline protection. The second investigates the interaction between aquatic organisms and water control weirs. The project will utilize acoustic imaging.

Due to legislation passed at the request of oyster industry members during the 2008 regular legislative session, fishermen who harvest oysters from the public oyster seed grounds (excluding Calcasieu and Sabine Lakes) are required to hold a new Public Oyster Seed Ground Vessel Permit as of January 1, 2009. Complex qualifying criteria determine which vessels are able to get permits; however approximately 500 residents and 70 non-residents have obtained these vessel permits. An Appeals Board was created by the new law to hear denial appeals and it makes recommendations to the LDWF Secretary. The board is anticipated to begin meeting after administrative rules are in place on March 20, 2009.

The LDWF has modified reef fish harvest rules within state waters to reflect changes in federal seasons and quotas. The king mackerel commercial fishery in state waters will open on July 1, 2009 and remain open until quotas for the western Gulf are reached.

Louisiana continues to examine the life history and fisheries characteristics of species that are experiencing increasing harvest pressures with new regulations (such as gray and vermilion snappers).

The LDWF continues its involvement in the Louisiana Cooperative Marine Sport Fish Tagging Program. Since the program's redevelopment in 2004, over 16,000 red drum and spotted seatrout have been tagged by volunteer anglers. To date, there have been over 850 recaptures including 693 red drum and 202 spotted sea trout for a recapture percentage of 4.6% and 3.0%, respectively. Days-at-large for red drum range from 0 to 805, with spotted seatrout ranging from 1 to 310. There are currently over 250 participating anglers in the program.

Activity continues concerning a spotted seatrout telemetry study in Calcasieu Lake. The work is being conducted by the Louisiana State University in cooperation with the LDWF. An additional 35 spotted seatrout were acoustically tagged in the fall of 2008.

The LDWF continues its collaboration with Southeastern Louisiana University to examine the genetic structure of red drum and spotted seatrout populations within Louisiana's bay systems.

The LDWF is assisting in funding 8 boating and fishing access projects in coastal Louisiana for \$1.8 million through Sport Fish Restoration

The Louisiana Artificial Reef Program accepted 42 oil & gas structures in 2008. Fifteen to twenty oil & gas structure reef deployments are anticipated in 2009. Based on the Program's experience with Special Artificial Reef Sites (SARS) related to Katrina and Rita, the SARS program is currently being re-evaluated. Hurricane Ike destroyed 60 platforms and extensively damaged 31 others. In addition to the work being performed offshore four inshore sites are being developed with reef balls and another two sites will be enhanced with #57 limestone. LDWF is also working with LA Department of Transportation and Development to utilize bridge rubble to create two inshore reefs when the I-10 bridges over Lake Pontchartrain are decommissioned.

Texas Report: J. Mambretti

REGULATORY ISSUES

During November 2008 to early January 2009, Coastal Fisheries hosted 10 public scoping meetings plus commercial and recreational workgroup meeting to discuss potential changes to existing flounder and other regulations. During these coastwide meetings, staff presented recent data trends regarding the flounder fishery and sought input regarding regulations or strategies for managing the fishery, which has declined significantly since 1982. After the flounder meetings, regulations to address flounder concerns were proposed at the TPW Commission meeting in January 2009.

In January, the TPWD Commission moved three Coastal Fisheries proposals from the Statewide Hunting and Fishing Proclamation to the Texas Register. The proposals deal with flounder, federal consistency issues for sharks and other species, and a paddle craft licensing and training proposal. Long-term downward trends in the flounder abundance warranted a complete closure to all gears during the month of November and a year-round reduction in daily bag limit from 10 to 5 for recreational and from 60 to 30 for commercial take. The anticipated effect of this regulation on southern flounder after one generation (6 years) is an increased spawning stock

biomass (102.5%) and decreased harvest by numbers (45.0%) and weight (36.5%). The minimum size limit will remain 14 inches for both recreational and commercial fishermen.

Coastal fisheries continues to look at several species managed jointly with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council to become more consistent by matching bag and size limits for sharks, greater amberjack (increasing the minimum size limit for Greater amberjack from 32 inches to 34 inches TL), gag grouper (establishing a minimum size limit of 22 inches and bag limit of 2 per person with the possession limits being twice the daily bag limit), and gray triggerfish (establishing a minimum size limits of 14 inches TL and bag limit of 20 per person with the possession limits being twice the daily bag limit). TPWD proposed to change the minimum length limit for all shark species from 24 inches TL to 64 inches TL, except for Atlantic sharpnose, blacktip, and bonnethead sharks which will retain the current 24 inches TL minimum length limit. For the allowable shark species, the bag limit will remain 1 fish per person per day and a 2 fish possession limit. In addition, TPWD will match the federal prohibited shark list (zero bag limit) that includes: Atlantic angel, basking, bigeye sand tiger, bigeye sixgill, bigeye thresher, bignose, Caribbean reef, Caribbean sharpnose, dusky, Galapagos, longfin mako, narrowtooth, night, porbeagle, sandbar, sand tiger, sevengill, silky, sixgill, smalltail, whale, and white.

TPWD also proposes to create a "Paddlecraft Guide License" that would allow for paddle craft operators to receive a saltwater guide license by establishing a different set of requirements other than a United States Coast Guard (USCG) Operator of an Uninspected Passenger Vessel license. As indicated the USCG license current requirements may fail to address the unique safety issues associated with paddle craft and also may be restricting the licensing of paddle craft guides due to the "sea time" requirement. The proposal will create a paddle craft guide license and in order to receive the license the guide will have to show certification or proof of completion for a TPWD boater safety course and a CPR/First Aid training, and completion of the American Canoe Association "Level II Essentials of Kayak Touring" and "Coastal Kayak Trip Leading" courses or a British Canoe Union "Three Star Sea Kayak" and "Four Star Leader Sea Kayak" courses.

During February 2009, the department held more comprehensive statewide public scoping meetings involving regulatory proposals by all divisions.

MENHADEN TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH

In 2008, the TPW Commission established a total allowable catch (TAC) limit on gulf menhaden caught in the Texas Territorial Sea and commercially landed in Louisiana. The TAC went into effect on 1 September 2008 and was set at the previous 5-year (2002-2006) average of 31.5 million pounds per year. The upcoming 2009 fishing season will be the first fishing season this regulation will apply. The regulation is a precautionary ecosystem-based, predator/prey approach with the management of the menhaden fishery in Texas waters.

COASTAL FISHERIES PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

- Life History Research - PRBMFRS
Gray Snapper samples were collected and processed for a life history study.

Routine monitoring otolith collections from gill net samples were continued, as was processing and aging of otoliths collected in previous years. Cedar Lakes resource monitoring using gillnets and bag seines was also continued.

Otoliths from red drum sampled for a genetics project conducted by Dr. John Gold, Texas A&M University were collected, processed and aged.

The GSFC funded FIN-Biological Sampling project for otolith collection and processing for various marine species was continued.

- Genetics Research – PRBMFRS
Sample collection and processing for southern flounder and alligator gar genetic variation studies is continuing.

A cooperative effort with Texas A&M University at Galveston involving species identification confirmation of snook species collected in Texas waters was initiated.

Coordination of red drum fin clip collections for a genetics project conducted by Dr. John Gold, Texas A&M University is continuing.

- Artificial Reef Project
TPWD is drafting a settlement with Resolve Marine Services to complete 4 reefing projects for Coastal Fisheries as compensation for the Texas Clipper ship being on its side. These projects will involve reefing a tug boat and materials from the Humble Channel Bridge, moving several thousand tons of concrete culverts offshore, and dismantling an obsolete barge that has become too un-seaworthy to reef.

Over 30 oil platforms on are TPWD "books" as working donations. This means that some of these donations may not come to fruition because of economic factors and other issues with individual petroleum companies. Coastal Fisheries has received 2 donations since the October 2008 Texas Report.

Biological monitoring on the Texas Clipper is going well, and TPWD received recognition from UT-Brownsville in helping the university begin its first offshore marine research program. There are now 3 graduate students working on master's degree projects at the Clipper.

TPWD Public Television will air 2 Texas Clipper stories on PBS stations on 22 March 2009. This will be the first time that the entire show is dedicated to a specific topic.

Reef staff met with numerous private groups who have expressed interests in participating in public reefing activities. We anticipate their participation within the next several years.

- Buyback Programs
Coastal Fisheries is in the application period for the 24th round of the Inshore Shrimp License Management Program, the 10th round for the Crab License Management

Program, and the 13th round of the Commercial Finfish License Management Program. Applications will be taken until 13 March 2009.

- **Fish Stocking Efforts**
Sea Center Texas staff spawned, hatched, and reared 7 mm TL Sabine Lake southern flounder that will soon be stocked in an outdoor rearing pond. The flounder were spawned on 6 February 2009 and will be raised to 40-45 mm for release into Sabine Lake.
- **Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program**
The 2009 Crab Trap Removal Program was a great success with 1359 crab traps being removed by 141 volunteers. San Antonio Bay accounted for 998 traps or 73% of the total traps collected. Over 25,000 abandoned crab traps have been removed since the program began eight years ago.
- **Oysters**
In October 2008, bacteriological tests of oyster growing waters and oyster meats were conducted once waste water treatment plants were back on line in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. Oyster meats were also tested for viruses. All of the samples came back within acceptable limits. However, Galveston Bay and West Galveston Bay did not open to public reef fishermen on 1 November 2008 (the beginning of the public oyster season in TX) because most of the shellfish markers were down as a result of the storm. Bastrop and Christmas Bays and all system south to South Bay did open to oyster harvest on 1 November 2008. Without the markers, the boundaries between approved and unapproved waters were not enforceable therefore the season opening was delayed. Oyster leases in Galveston Bay opened for commercial harvest on November 6 because a requirement of the TPWD Harvest Permit is that corner markers must be in place thus establishing an enforceable boundary. Shellfish markers were replaced by a DSHS contractor and the public season opened the 26th of November.

SPECIAL EFFORTS, STUDIES, AND TOPICS

Texas General Land Office and Texas Department of Transportation have expressed interest in closing Rollover Pass while recreational angler groups are fighting to keep it open. There are pros and cons on both sides of this argument and TPWD is researching the proposed closure and will provide information to address the discussion.

During late 2008, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department went through a legislative Sunset Commission process. In mid-November, staff of the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission released its report following a review of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The 12-member commission, made up of 10 legislators and two public members, reviews the policies and programs of TPWD, questioning the need for the agency, looked for potential duplication of other public services or programs, and considers new and innovative changes to improve the agency's operations and activities. The agency was generally praised for the work we do and the professionalism we display while performing our mission. There were a few areas of improvement recommended in the Sunset Commission report and the agency agreed the

recommendations would help the agency manage natural resources better in the future. The overall tone of the hearing was very favorable for the agency.

Coastal Wetland Planning Protection and Restoration Act Project Funds have been awarded to the Swan Lake Ranch Project to purchase a conservation easement on 3,500 acres of Guadalupe River Delta for whooping crane habitat. TPWD, USFWS, and the Nature Conservancy partnered for this project to complement over 148,000 acres of conservation lands within the Guadalupe River Delta and San Antonio Bay System.

'OTHERS'

Thanks to big-hearted donations from many TPWD employees and outside supporters, the department recently sent grants totaling close to \$117,000 to employees affected by Hurricane Ike. All told, 39 employees applied for relief, and all of them received some level of grant funding. Funds for these grants came from a Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation donation of \$100,000, a Palo Duro Canyon State Park friends' group donation of \$10,000, and donations from many TPWD employees and outside supporters.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Report: R. Crabtree

FISHERY OPENINGS AND CLOSINGS AND QUOTA MONITORING SUMMARY

- **Shrimp:**
At the January 2009 meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council), NOAA Fisheries Service reported that the level of effort demonstrated during 2008 in the 10 to 30 fathom depth stratum of the north-central and western Gulf of Mexico was far below the established threshold that would trigger the need for a time-area closure during 2009. The Council voted at that meeting to continue the Texas Closure for 2009.
- **Recreational Red Snapper:**
Federal waters opened June 1 and closed August 5, 2008. The recreational fishery in federal waters will re-open June 1, 2009. By April, NOAA Fisheries Service intends to provide projected estimates of any early closure, based on updated recreational landings, and the level of compatibility of state regulations.
- **Commercial Red Snapper:**
For 2008, 97 percent of the quota was harvested. A total of 59,791 pounds were left in 304 different accounts. 2009 allocations were issued to 524 accounts.
- **Commercial King Mackerel:**
The 2008-2009 fishing year for the Gulf migratory group of king mackerel began on July 1, 2008. For the first time since a 3,000-pound trip limit was implemented, the western Gulf of Mexico was not closed by late fall; the quota for the western Gulf of Mexico stands at approximately 95 percent taken as of March 1. Approximately 70 percent of the northern sub-zone quota has been taken. The southern sub-zone gillnet fishery opened on January 20 and closed on January 30, 2009; the southern sub-zone hook-and line fishery closed on February 28. The Florida east coast subzone closed on March 6, 2009.

- **Commercial Shallow Water Grouper:**
For 2008, 65 percent of the shallow water grouper quota was landed; 81 percent of the red grouper quota was landed. Gag landings for 2008 represented 83 percent of the quota established for 2009.
- **Commercial Deep Water Grouper and Tilefish:**
NOAA Fisheries Service closed the deep water grouper and tilefish fisheries on May 10, 2008. The projections were optimistic in regard to the anticipated landings, and neither quota was met by the closure date. NOAA Fisheries Service re-opened these fisheries on November 1, 2008, for 10 days to allow the remainder of the quota to be harvested.
- **Commercial Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish:**
For 2008, approximately 47 percent of the greater amberjack quota and 61 percent of the gray triggerfish quota was landed.

(NOTE: The following landings and percentages represent only Waves 1-5 [January – October] of 2008 for the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey, and do not include headboat or Texas landings.)

- **Recreational Red Snapper:**
Landings are estimated at 3,068,184 pounds or 125 percent of the quota. Preliminary review of the landings information indicates fewer but larger red snapper are being harvested compared to previous years.
- **Recreational Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish:**
Approximately 76 percent of the recreational greater amberjack recreational quota was landed through October, and more than 88 percent of the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) for gray triggerfish was landed.
- **Recreational Gag and Red Grouper:**
Amendment 30B will establish ACLs for the recreational fishery for both gag (2.59 million pounds) and red grouper (1.85 million pounds) for 2009. Through October 2008, gag landings were at 101 percent of the designated ACL, and 127 percent of the designated 2.06 million pound catch target. Red grouper landings, through October, were estimated at 42 percent of the ACL.
- **Seasonal Closures:**
A commercial closure for gag, red grouper, and black grouper is in effect February 15 through March 14. A commercial closure for greater amberjack is in effect from March 1 through May 31. A recreational closure for gag from February 1 through March 31 is enacted in federal waters and Florida state waters. A federal water closure from February 15 through March 14 is in effect for red and black groupers, but there is no recreational closure for red and black grouper in Florida State waters.

PERMITS STATUS

Active permits as of March 4, 2009:

- 1,557 moratorium Gulf shrimp permits and 319 royal red shrimp endorsements.
- 1,291 for-hire coastal pelagic moratorium permits; 37 historical captain permits.
- 1,443 commercial king mackerel moratorium permits (21 commercial king mackerel gillnet; includes South Atlantic).
- 1,477 commercial Spanish mackerel permits (includes South Atlantic).
- 1,260 for-hire reef fish moratorium permits; 37 historical captain permits.
- 869 commercial reef fish moratorium permits.

AMENDMENT STATUS

- **Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ):**
NOAA Fisheries Service continues to monitor, develop, and refine the support infrastructure for the IFQ program. NOAA Fisheries Service is attempting to integrate this IFQ program and the proposed grouper/tilefish IFQ program (Reef Fish Amendment 29) to minimize participant confusion.
- **Reef Fish Amendment 29:**
This amendment would establish a multi-species IFQ for the Gulf of Mexico commercial grouper and tilefish fisheries. During December 2008, NOAA Fisheries Service conducted a referendum vote among eligible reef fish permit holders for their approval or disapproval of the proposed IFQ program. Of 301 ballots mailed out, all but 5 ballots were delivered to eligible voters. Of the 274 ballots returned, 220 voters (81 percent) were in favor of the IFQ, 50 were opposed, and 4 ballots were declared invalid. The Council approved Amendment 29 for review by the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) at its January 2009 meeting, and NOAA Fisheries Service is currently reviewing the amendment and proposed rule. It is anticipated the IFQ would be implemented effective January 1, 2010.
- **Reef Fish Amendment 30B:**
Amendment 30B includes actions to end overfishing of gag, increase red grouper harvest, and establish sector specific ACLs and accountability measures for these two species. NOAA Fisheries Service received this amendment from the Council for review and possible implementation by the Secretary. The comment period on the amendment and the proposed rule closed in early January 2009; the Secretary approved the amendment on January 23, 2009. A final rule has been submitted to the Department of Commerce for approval and publication.
- **Reef Fish Interim Rule:**
Because gag are undergoing overfishing, the Council requested NOAA Fisheries Service implement an interim rule to apply harvesting restrictions for gag and other reef fish species undergoing overfishing until the actions in Amendment 30B can be implemented. The interim rule, effective January 1, 2009, includes the following temporary regulations:
 - Establishment of a commercial quota and a 2-fish per person recreational bag limit for gag.

- Extension of the current recreational closure for gag to February 1 through March 31 (the recreational closure for red and black grouper remains at February 15 to March 15).
- Requirement for all vessels with federal reef fish permits to comply with the more restrictive of state or federal regulations when fishing for gag, greater amberjack, gray triggerfish, and red snapper in state waters.

The 5-grouper aggregate recreational bag limit remains in effect under interim regulations. For red grouper, the bag limit in federal waters remains at 1 fish per person. In Florida State waters, the red grouper bag limit is 2 fish per person.

- **Generic Aquaculture Fishery Management Plan (FMP):**
This action would establish a regional permitting process for regulating and promoting environmentally-sound and economically-sustainable aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico exclusive economic zone, consistent with the goals of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council approved the FMP for submission and review by the Secretary at its January 2009 meeting. NOAA Fisheries Service is currently reviewing the amendment and proposed rule.
- **Spiny Lobster Joint Amendment:**
The amendment established a minimum import size for spiny lobsters coming into the United States. Public hearings were held in July 2008. Following approval by all three southeastern fishery management councils, the amendment was submitted for review by the Secretary. The amendment was approved on December 22, 2008, and a final rule implementing this action published in the *Federal Register* on January 12, 2009, effective February 11, 2009.
- **Framework Action to Revise the List of Allowable Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs):**
NOAA Fisheries Service published regulations restricting the allowable placement of fisheye-type BRDs to less than 9 feet from the cod end tie off rings, and decertifying the Expanded Mesh BRD. The effective date for these changes was delayed until May 18, 2009, to allow the industry time to make the necessary adjustments.
- **Reef Fish Bottom Longline Emergency Rule:**
At its January 2009 meeting, the Council requested NOAA Fisheries Service enact emergency regulations prohibiting the use of bottom longlines to fish for reef fish in waters shallower than 50 fathoms east of Cape San Blas, Florida. In addition, once the deep water grouper and tilefish fisheries quotas are met, all bottom longlining for reef fish east of Cape San Blas would be prohibited. This request is in response to a September 2008 report by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center indicating interactions with turtles by this segment of the reef fish fishery has far exceeded the take allowed under the current biological opinion for the fishery. NOAA Fisheries Service is currently considering this request, and has reinitiated a consultation on the fishery.

PROTECTED RESOURCES DIVISION

- **TED Rule Changes:**
NOAA Fisheries Service is currently drafting regulations to permit new materials and designs as approved TEDs in the shrimp fishery. Additionally, NOAA Fisheries Service is currently considering several changes to the existing TED regulations, which could potentially apply TED requirements to additional fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico and along the Atlantic coast.
- An observer on a shrimping vessel on a trip west of the Florida Keys, just south of the Tortugas grounds, witnessed three sawfish interactions. Because sawfish are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, NOAA is most likely going to reinstate consultation on the shrimp fishery and its interactions with protected resources.

FMP Recommendations Matrix

S. VanderKooy reminded the TCC that they will begin to review the more technical/scientific recommendations from the IJF program FMP's that are not covered by the SFFMC starting this coming fall. He informed the TCC that he would be sending out a Recommendations Matrix this summer for their review.

Subcommittee Reports

Crab

T. Wagner reported that crab landings were down in all states for 2008, with only about 42 million pounds being taken Gulf wide. He also pointed out that the States are continuing with the derelict trap removal program and to date more than 50,000 traps have been removed and recycled since 2002. There was also an update on the crab aquaculture project at GCRL where they are experimenting with growing out crabs in ponds. They will be harvesting the first batches in mid April of this year to see what the survival rate is. The subcommittee also heard a presentation on blue crab aging using the biochemical analysis of Lipofuscin in Florida. Lipofuscin is a fluorescent pigment and stable byproduct of metabolism that accumulates over time in neural tissues and can be quantified using biochemical methods developed in Rodger Harvey's lab. The results from this study may be used as a stock assessment tool to manage the blue crab fishery once a Gulf calibration curve is determined.

V. Vail made a motion to accept the report and it passed unanimously.

SEAMAP

J. Rester stated that Lloyd Kirk was introduced as the new SEAMAP data manager and gave a presentation of the work he has been doing at the GSMFC. The subcommittee discussed the move to standardize all trawl stations with a 30 minute tow time. Currently SEAMAP trawl stations cover a depth stratum with a minimum 10 minute tow time and no longer stratify on day or night. It can sometimes take several hours of trawling to cover a depth stratum. A standard

30 minutes tow time will allow the trawl surveys to increase the number of stations that they sample each year. NMFS moved to 30 minute tows last year, but the states did not. Before the summer trawl survey begins, the Subcommittee will have the methodology reviewed before the states agree to move to a 30 minute tow. The Subcommittee wants to make sure that 30 minute tows will be comparable to the old methodology. The Subcommittee also discussed developing the protocols for a juvenile menhaden survey. SEAMAP partners have experienced lengthy delays when applying for TED exemptions and turtle interaction exemptions. The Subcommittee made a **motion that the Commission send a letter to the appropriate person within NMFS requesting an expedited review and processing of all SEAMAP participants' TED exemption letters and turtle interaction letters.**

A motion to accept the report and also for the Commission to send the letter was made by K. Cuevas and passed without opposition.

Data Management

R. Cody reported that the Subcommittee held a workshop on the For-Hire Fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. The workshop was divided into three sections (1) presentations of various For-Hire reporting options and For-Hire Work Groups developments within MRIP; (2) a discussion of the presentations; and (3) development of recommendations based on those discussions. Presentations included The Gulf of Mexico Automated Reporting System (GOMARS), the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries voluntary reporting system, Marine Recreational Improvement Program/For Hire Work Group report and the Save-Our-Selves (SOS) data entry application. The initial discussion of the presentations focused on the complementary nature of the various reporting systems and the features in common. The consensus of the discussion participants was that trip level information represented a minimum requirement for the systems. There was also discussion about the frequency and timeliness of data availability and the need for adequate statistically defensible validation procedures. Considerable time was devoted to discussion of the Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishery and the VMS currently in place for the commercial sector. The point was made by the Subcommittee that reporting systems needed to be able to accommodate data needs for other species and that the For-hire fishery represented a diverse assemblage of vessels fishing different waters and targeting a variety of species. There was a shared concern that the methodologies/systems presented excluded participation of some sectors of the fishery that may not have access to technologies necessary for participation or that cost may be an issue for some. The group recommended that whatever systems were pursued for development, the resulting systems needed to be consistent with MRIP objectives and function within the MRIP framework. There was recognition that the mechanisms for communication between MRIP and the various groups interested in developing reporting systems were inadequate and that improvements were needed. The Subcommittee acknowledged that 100% compliance within any reporting system was difficult to obtain. However, it was recommended that careful consideration is given to validation of information obtained (in terms of meeting statistical criteria consistent with MRIP designs) and that compliance enforcement would need to be addressed. In terms of compliance, the Subcommittee recommended that greater emphasis was (and will be) needed on outreach.

V. Guillory made a motion to accept the report and it passed unanimously.

Artificial Reef

J. Ballard reported that the Subcommittee held a joint meeting with the ASMFC's Subcommittee in Jacksonville, Florida in November. At the meeting the Subcommittee discussed the action item that was passed by the TCC, to look into a program where the federal government would fully fund the reefing of decommissioned naval ships and to generate a letter to the appropriate federal personnel addressing this issue. Following the meeting the GSMFC's Subcommittee drafted a letter proposing and outlining a program where the federal government would:

- Maintain responsibility for cleaning and preparing all donated ships to EPA-specifications as outlined in "*National Guidance: Best Management Practices for Preparing Vessels Intended to Create Artificial Reefs*".
- Maintain responsibility for ship towing, and ensure that they are sunk in a safe manner on permitted reef sites as delineated in appropriate permits.
- Maintain title to, and liability for, donated ships until such time as they are satisfactorily sunk on permitted artificial reef sites.
- Ensure that ships are provided to all interested states in as equitable a manner as possible.

These letters will be sent to the Secretary of Transportation (for MARAD) and the Secretary of the Navy.

A motion to accept the report and in doing so approve to have the Commission send the letters (with Larry's and James's discretion with regards to timing) was made by V. Vail and passed without opposition.

Habitat

J. Rester stated that Kent Smith from FWC gave a presentation on the development of Florida's inshore artificial reef BMP. This presentation was followed by a discussion of the development of a Commission BMP for inshore artificial reefs. The Subcommittee had reviewed a draft inshore artificial reef BMP that was based upon Florida's BMPs. This discussion resulted in the forming of a work group made up of Habitat and Artificial Reef Subcommittee members that will develop a more general inshore artificial reef BMP that may be more relevant to all member states. Jim Cowan gave a presentation that outlined the value to fisheries of coastal and offshore habitats and how fish utilize these different areas. The Subcommittee also heard updates on the habitat section of the oyster FMP and the *Arenarius* profile.

J. Mareska made a motion to accept the report and it passed unanimously.

Other Business

C. Perret announced that he would be retiring over the summer and thanked the committee for the opportunity to be the Chair for the past several years. He announced that at the next meeting V. Guillory would be the Acting Chairman.

With no further business to discuss C. Perret adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday, March 18, 2009

New Orleans, Louisiana

Chairman **V. Vail** called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Facilitator **D. Donaldson** conducted the meeting. The following members and others were present:

Members

Bonnie Ponwith, NOAA/SEFSC, Miami, FL
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Roy Crabtree, NOAA/SERO St. Petersburg, FL
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Chris Denson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL (*proxy for V. Minton*)
Joe Shepard, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Others

Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Ellie Roche, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Empire, LA
Jeff Barger, EDF, Austin, TX
Tony Reisinger, Texas Sea Grant
David McKinney, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
Wilson Gaidry, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Houma, LA
Bill Kiene, NOAA, National Marine Sanctuaries, Galveston, TX

Staff

Larry Simpson, Executive Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, Sportfish Restoration/Aquatic Invasives Coordinator, GSMFC
Gregg Bray, RecFIN(SE) Programmer/Analyst, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, FIN Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, Systems Administrator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, Disaster Program, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, IIF Program Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Wendy Garner, Accountant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the meeting held on October 15, 2008 in Key Largo, Florida were approved as written.

Menhaden Advisory Committee Report

S. VanderKooy gave the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC) report for Chairman J. Smith who was unable to attend. The total landings in 2008 for reduction were 425,442 metric tons which was down from 2007 by 6% and 9% from the previous 5-yr average. Hurricane Dolly and Tropical Storm Fay hampered fishing activities and hurricanes Gustav and Ike caused flooding and power outages at the Cameron and Abbeville plants. Cameron closed for the remainder of fishing season while Abbeville made repairs. Forty-one vessels participated in 2008, thirty-nine regular steamers and two run boats with a nominal fishing effort of 355,800 vessel ton weeks which was down 4% from 2007. Smith anticipates four factories being open in 2009 with forty-one vessels and based on 2008 effort, forecasts around 443,000 metric tons to be landed in 2009.

Smith also provided an update on the Atlantic menhaden season for 2008. Omega's Reedville plant fished ten vessels in 2008 for reduction and landed 141,133 metric tons. There was no lack of fish this year on the Atlantic but the fishery had persistent plant problems throughout the season and placed some of the boats on quotas. Of note, 2008 marked the fourth consecutive summer that adult Atlantic menhaden were abundant in southern New England waters and fish were available throughout Rhode Island and as far north as Portland, Maine. Also of note, 2008 was the third year for Chesapeake Bay 'Cap' which limited the reduction landings from Chesapeake Bay 109,000 metric tons per year for 5 years. For the third year in a row, the removals were considerably under the 'Cap' allowing the industry credit as an overage up to 122,000 metric tons for 2009.

VanderKooy reported that D. Vaughan will be conducting the 2009 'Peer-Reviewed' stock assessment for Atlantic menhaden through the SEDAR program with the Data workshop scheduled for May, the Assessment Workshop in October, and the Peer-Review in March of 2010.

VanderKooy reported that V. Guillory of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) provided the Louisiana forecast for 2009. Guillory forecasts the landings in Louisiana will be between 424,000 and 414,000 metric tons in 2009 which is just below the 10-year mean of 424,000 metric tons.

VanderKooy reported that R. Lukens of Omega Protein noted that the discrepancies between the NOAA data from the CDFRs and the Trip Tickets had been resolved. There was one plant that was providing the Captain's estimates and the actual pumpouts. Both Smith and the LDWF staff will work together to cross check the data on a more regular basis.

Lukens also reported to the MAC on the actions from the SEAMAP Subcommittee related to the request from the MAC to begin looking into directed sampling for menhaden recruitment. The Subcommittee agreed to put together a work group to review the original 1970s survey. Several

members of the MAC were recommended as possible work group members. The existing SEAMAP surveys and gear don't adequately sample juvenile menhaden. A conference call will be hosted by J. Rester to discuss the details and try to address a cost estimate for the October SEAMAP Subcommittee meeting.

VanderKooy reported that J. Smith placed the new scannable CDFR forms on eight Gulf boats and two Atlantic boats last season with excellent results. The new forms have been printed and are ready to distribute in anticipation of the 2009 season.

J. Rester provided a short presentation on hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico and the reduction fishery activities. The most recent data available for hypoxia and menhaden landings was for 2007. Rester plotted the 'dead zone' against where the fishery was making sets. He will continue to examine the extent and impact of the hypoxic zone on reduction fishing effort in the future.

VanderKooy reported that Corky Perret announced he would be retiring in June and Mike Buchanan of MDMR would be replacing him on the MAC.

C. Perret moved to accept the Menhaden Advisory Committee report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

FIN Data Program Report

D. Donaldson gave an update on the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) program. There are no new activities for 2009 however those in the cooperative agreement will continue. These include: coordination and administration of FIN Activities, collecting, managing and disseminating marine recreational fisheries data, head boat port sampling, Gulf menhaden port sampling, FIN data management system, trip ticket program implementation and operation in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, and recreational/commercial biological sampling.

Donaldson reported that the total budget for the FIN program for 2009 is just under \$5 million. The initial request for funding was \$5.49M therefore each agency took a 10% cut to reach the available funding amount. There is an additional \$150,000 for recreational data collection in Puerto Rico. There is also the potential for an additional \$150,000 from Fisheries Information System (FIS) for commercial biological sampling activities.

For-Hire Data Collection Methods Workshop

D. Donaldson reported that on Monday, March 16, 2009 a workshop was hosted by the Data Management Subcommittee to review various data collection methods for the for-hire industry. This was in response to requests from the industry in which several of the proposed methodologies were presented including MRIP, SOS, GOMARS, and the Louisiana For-Hire Trip Ticket Program. The group discussed each method and made recommendations for the Data Management Subcommittee's consideration. Those recommendations included a mandatory logbook collecting trip level data, the program must have enforcement and compliance of reporting, robust data validation, communication between MRIP and various projects, collection of the necessary data elements that scientists need to make decisions, and this

should be a cooperative effort. **Donaldson** noted that one of the greatest benefits derived from this workshop was getting all those involved discussing their various activities.

MRIP Update

D. Donaldson noted that MRIP came about as a result of the National Research Council report that reviewed the current marine recreational data collection activities and recommended that the survey should be re-designed to improve the appropriateness and effectiveness of the information being collected. **Donaldson** reported that there are various committees under MRIP with four work groups currently collecting information. The Design and Analysis Work Group is studying statistical estimation for released fish, private access, and night fishing. The Data Management and Standards Work Group have compiled an inventory of all data collection programs, and are establishing national and regional standards. The Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Work Group has looked at tournament versus non-tournament sampling, private angler phone survey, and has instituted a pilot survey in southeast Florida. The For-Hire Work Group is involved in inventorying programs, conducting an independent review, and developing an electronic trip reporting program in the Gulf of Mexico. The National Saltwater Angler Registry Team is establishing a universe of recreational fishermen throughout the country.

V. Vail noted that the GSMFC had requested the repeal of the statutory exemption from saltwater recreational licenses for persons fishing from shore in Florida. **Vail** reported that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWWCC) has made this request of their legislature for the past two years with no success, however it seems to be gaining support now that the National Registry is taking place.

Gustav and Ike Disaster Funding

L. Simpson reported that funds were allocated for damage done by hurricanes Gustav and Ike in Louisiana and Texas. **J. Shepard** of Louisiana reported that 5% of this money will go toward administration and the remainder will be split 50%-50% between wholesale/retail dealers and commercial fishermen. Commercial fishermen will be required to have held a license in 2008 and have recorded catch between the two hurricanes.

M. Ray of Texas reported that some of the money will be used for oyster renovation work in Galveston Bay, coastal marsh recovery, levee repair, and infrastructure repairs in support of the commercial fishing industry.

L. Simpson reported that Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) has established a working group to provide comment to the Secretary of Commerce and Congress regarding the implementation and use of disaster recovery funds. This work group will make recommendations on the request and declaration of fishery disasters in the future. Simpson serves on that work group and notes that it's important to know under which Act a disaster should be declared because there are subtle differences in both. Disasters must be natural and not 'man-made' and disasters cannot be declared for an overfishing situation if there are not natural overriding issues. Simpson requested any additional thoughts from the states on clarifying the disaster declarations for him to provide to the work group.

Status of State/Federal Cooperative Programs Funding Availability

L. Simpson discussed briefly the federal Budget which was signed for the upcoming year last week. Now the FIN, SEAMAP, and IJF Programs are covered. The GSMFC fiscal year is January to December while the federal government's fiscal year is October to September. The above programs have been borrowing internally in the mean time but this is problematic and at some point the programs cannot move forward while the funding is lacking. **Simpson** noted that there has to be a way to cut the red tape on getting the money out in as timely a manner as possible. **Simpson** would like to see a way for these programs to at least qualify for partial funding in situations like this especially when under a continuing resolution since this problem is becoming more and more routine. **Simpson** requested that R. Crabtree and B. Ponwith of NOAA check on the possibility of partial funding for future situations having to deal with continuing resolutions. **Crabtree** responded that he will check with headquarters to see what can be done.

Status of IJF Fishery Management Plans and Other IJF Activities

S. VanderKooy gave an overview of activities related to Fishery Management Plan (FMP) development. The Oyster Task Force has been working on a revision to the 1991 Oyster FMP and it is currently 85% complete. After editing, etc. a final draft should be finished by late summer. **VanderKooy** reported that a white trout/sand seatrout profile is also being developed. **VanderKooy** provided the Committee with a table of contents for both FMPs and the assignments of each technical task force (TTF) member. The Crab Subcommittee completed the revision to the derelict traps guideline document. This is available electronically and on the GSMFC website as a download.

VanderKooy reported that the Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) continues to work through their Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) program. A meeting was held this summer with the LEC and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Law Enforcement Advisory Panel (LEAP) to update the Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Strategic Plan as well as their Operations Plan for 2009-2010. **VanderKooy** noted that the LEC had requested a consolidated law enforcement pocket guide for officers only. The LEC was pleased with the draft guide especially with the size which can fit inside an officer's ticket book.

VanderKooy noted that since printing costs have escalated and the amount of publications being done in-house, staff has been discussing printing fewer hard copies and making publications available through the GSMFC website as a download or having them available on CD/DVD. A limited number of hard copies will still be available when requested.

L. Simpson discussed the GSMFC travel policy and IJF funding noting that in the past the Commission has paid for the State Directors to attend various GSMFC meetings. He requested that in the future if it is possible for a state to pay some travel costs it would help tremendously. For now the Commission will continue to operate as in the past, however in the future this could change.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:25 a.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING
MINUTES - 59th Annual Spring Meeting
Wednesday, March 18, 2009
New Orleans, Louisiana

Chairman B. Gautreaux called the meeting to order at 1:01 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

Chris Denson, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Vernon Minton*)
Virginia Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)
Butch Gautreaux, Louisiana Legislature, Morgan City, LA
Wilson Gaidry, Houma, LA
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge (*Proxy for Randy Pausina*)
David McKinney, Environmental Defense Fund, Austin, TX
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Robert L. Cook*)
Mike Jackson, Texas Senate, Austin, TX
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
William Perret, 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
Alex Miller, Staff Economist, Ocean Springs, MS
Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, SFP/ANS Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Roy Crabtree, NOAA/NMFS/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Gary Graham, Texas Sea Grant, West Columbia, TX
Tony Reisinger, Texas Sea Grant, San Benito, TX
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
Bill Kiene, NOAA/National Marine Sanctuaries, Galveston, TX
Jason Damen, Austin, TX
W. Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA

Rusty Gaude, Louisiana Sea Grant, Belle Chase, LA
Walter Chataginer, MS Marine Enforcement, Biloxi, MS

Adoption of Agenda

Agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes were adopted as presented.

GSMFC Standing Committee Reports

Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) – **W. Chataginer** reported that the LEC met on Tuesday, March 17, 2009.

He briefly reviewed several topics discussed by the LEC which included the status of the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF), the LEC Annual Law Enforcement Summary, and Public Service Announcements. The various States, NOAA and U. S. Coast Guard also reported on their enforcement activities.

Of major concern to the LEC is the status of funding for the Joint Enforcement Agreements (JEAs). The LEC had previously requested that the Commissioners send a letter to the Secretary of Commerce. On behalf of the LEC, W. Chataginer requested the Executive Director resend the letter to the new, Secretary of Commerce, in support of the continuation of the authorization and appropriations for the JEAs, and that the Commission support the LEC's request for an increase of these funds from \$13.9M to \$30M and to copy the Gulf States Congressional delegation.

C. Perret moved to approve the report and request to resend a letter to the new Secretary of Commerce as discussed. W. Gaidry seconded. The motion was approved.

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) Report – **C. Perret** reported that the TCC met on Tuesday, March 17, 2009. They received reports from all of the Gulf States and NOAA Fisheries. The following subcommittees reported to the TCC: Crab, SEAMAP, Data Management, Artificial Reef, and Habitat. He briefed the Commissioners on their activities.

On behalf of the SEAMAP Subcommittee the TCC requested the Commission send a letter to the appropriate person within NMFS requesting an expedited review and processing of all SEAMAP participants' TEDs exemption letters and turtle interaction letters. **M. Ray moved to accept recommendation, W. Gaidry seconded. Motion approved.**

On behalf of the Artificial Reef Subcommittee, the TCC recommended the Commission send the letters drafted by the Artificial Reef Subcommittee outlining a program where the federal government would fully fund and execute the reefing of decommissioned naval ships in state

waters with the Executive Director's discretion in regards to timing. **G. Vail moved to approve recommendation, C. Perret seconded. Motion approved.**

M. Ray moved to approve TCC report. Vail Seconded. The report was approved.

State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S-FFMC) Report – **D. Donaldson** reported that the S-FFMC met earlier in the day. The S-FFMC received reports from the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC). They also heard updates on the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF), Fisheries Information Network Program (FIN), For-Hire Data Collection Methods Workshop, MRIP, and Gustav and Ike Disaster Funding. Also discussed was the status of State/Federal Cooperative Programs funding. The Committee is concerned with the amount of time it takes to get these funds to recipients.

C. Perret moved to approve the report. W. Gaidry seconded. The report was approved.

Sea Grant Fisheries Extension Advisory Panel Report (SG-FEAP)

G. Graham reported that the SG-FEAP met on March 17. The group heard a detailed report from **R. Lukens** regarding management considerations and status of the Gulf menhaden industry. Other topics discussed were an exchange of ideas and information on shrimp gear and a project on product integrity of grouper (consumer perception of grouper mislabeling). **C. Adams** discussed efforts to put together a panel for the Seafood Science and Technology Conference to be held in October 2009.

NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office

R. Crabtree reported on the activities of the SERO. His report was as follows:

Fishery Openings and Closings and Quota Monitoring Summary

Shrimp: At the January 2009 meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council), NOAA Fisheries Service reported that the level of effort demonstrated during 2008 in the 10 to 30 fathom depth stratum of the north-central and western Gulf of Mexico was far below the established threshold that would trigger the need for a time-area closure during 2009. The Council voted at that meeting to continue the Texas Closure for 2009.

Recreational Red Snapper: Federal waters opened June 1 and closed August 5, 2008. The recreational fishery in federal waters will re-open June 1, 2009. By April, NOAA Fisheries Service intends to provide projected estimates of any early closure, based on updated recreational landings, and the level of compatibility of state regulations.

Commercial Red Snapper: For 2008, 97 percent of the quota was harvested. A total of 59,791 pounds were left in 304 different accounts. 2009 allocations were issued to 524 accounts.

Commercial King Mackerel: The 2008-2009 fishing year for the Gulf migratory group of king mackerel began on July 1, 2008. For the first time since a 3,000-pound trip limit was implemented, the western Gulf of Mexico was not closed by late fall; the quota for the western

Gulf of Mexico stands at approximately 95 percent taken as of March 1. Approximately 70 percent of the northern sub-zone quota has been taken. The southern sub-zone gillnet fishery opened on January 20 and closed on January 30, 2009; the southern sub-zone hook-and line fishery closed on February 28. The Florida east coast subzone closed on March 6, 2009.

Commercial Shallow Water Grouper: For 2008, 65 percent of the shallow water grouper quota was landed; 81 percent of the red grouper quota was landed. Gag landings for 2008 represented 83 percent of the quota established for 2009.

Commercial Deep Water Grouper and Tilefish: NOAA Fisheries Service closed the deep water grouper and tilefish fisheries on May 10, 2008. The projections were optimistic in regard to the anticipated landings, and neither quota was met by the closure date. NOAA Fisheries Service re-opened these fisheries on November 1, 2008, for 10 days to allow the remainder of the quota to be harvested.

Commercial Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish: For 2008, approximately 47 percent of the greater amberjack quota and 61 percent of the gray triggerfish quota was landed.

(NOTE: The following landings and percentages represent only Waves 1-5 [January – October] of 2008 for the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey, and do not include headboat or Texas landings.)

Recreational Red Snapper: Landings are estimated at 3,068,184 pounds or 125 percent of the quota. Preliminary review of the landings information indicates fewer but larger red snapper are being harvested compared to previous years.

Recreational Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish: Approximately 76 percent of the recreational greater amberjack recreational quota was landed through October, and more than 88 percent of the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) for gray triggerfish was landed.

Recreational Gag and Red Grouper: Amendment 30B will establish ACLs for the recreational fishery for both gag (2.59 million pounds) and red grouper (1.85 million pounds) for 2009. Through October 2008, gag landings were at 101 percent of the designated ACL, and 127 percent of the designated 2.06 million pound catch target. Red grouper landings, through October, were estimated at 42 percent of the ACL.

Seasonal Closures: A commercial closure for gag, red grouper, and black grouper is in effect February 15 through March 14. A commercial closure for greater amberjack is in effect from March 1 through May 31. A recreational closure for gag from February 1 through March 31 is enacted in federal waters and Florida state waters. A federal water closure from February 15 through March 14 is in effect for red and black groupers, but there is no recreational closure for red and black grouper in Florida State waters.

Permits Status

Active permits as of March 4, 2009:

- 1,557 moratorium Gulf shrimp permits and 319 royal red shrimp endorsements.

- 1,291 for-hire coastal pelagic moratorium permits; 37 historical captain permits.
- 1,443 commercial king mackerel moratorium permits (21 commercial king mackerel gillnet; includes South Atlantic).
- 1,477 commercial Spanish mackerel permits (includes South Atlantic).
- 1,260 for-hire reef fish moratorium permits; 37 historical captain permits.
- 869 commercial reef fish moratorium permits.

Amendment Status

Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ): NOAA Fisheries Service continues to monitor, develop, and refine the support infrastructure for the IFQ program. NOAA Fisheries Service is attempting to integrate this IFQ program and the proposed grouper/tilefish IFQ program (Reef Fish Amendment 29) to minimize participant confusion.

Reef Fish Amendment 29: This amendment would establish a multi-species IFQ for the Gulf of Mexico commercial grouper and tilefish fisheries. During December 2008, NOAA Fisheries Service conducted a referendum vote among eligible reef fish permit holders for their approval or disapproval of the proposed IFQ program. Of 301 ballots mailed out, all but 5 ballots were delivered to eligible voters. Of the 274 ballots returned, 220 voters (81 percent) were in favor of the IFQ, 50 were opposed, and 4 ballots were declared invalid. The Council approved Amendment 29 for review by the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) at its January 2009 meeting, and NOAA Fisheries Service is currently reviewing the amendment and proposed rule. It is anticipated the IFQ would be implemented effective January 1, 2010.

Reef Fish Amendment 30B: Amendment 30B includes actions to end overfishing of gag, increase red grouper harvest, and establish sector specific ACLs and accountability measures for these two species. NOAA Fisheries Service received this amendment from the Council for review and possible implementation by the Secretary. The comment period on the amendment and the proposed rule closed in early January 2009; the Secretary approved the amendment on January 23, 2009. A final rule has been submitted to the Department of Commerce for approval and publication.

Reef Fish Interim Rule: Because gag are undergoing overfishing, the Council requested NOAA Fisheries Service implement an interim rule to apply harvesting restrictions for gag and other reef fish species undergoing overfishing until the actions in Amendment 30B can be implemented. The interim rule, effective January 1, 2009, includes the following temporary regulations:

- Establishment of a commercial quota and a 2-fish per person recreational bag limit for gag.
- Extension of the current recreational closure for gag to February 1 through March 31 (the recreational closure for red and black grouper remains at February 15 to March 15).
- Requirement for all vessels with federal reef fish permits to comply with the more restrictive of state or federal regulations when fishing for gag, greater amberjack, gray triggerfish, and red snapper in state waters.

The 5-grouper aggregate recreational bag limit remains in effect under interim regulations. For red grouper, the bag limit in federal waters remains at 1 fish per person. In Florida State waters, the red grouper bag limit is 2 fish per person.

Generic Aquaculture Fishery Management Plan (FMP): This action would establish a regional permitting process for regulating and promoting environmentally-sound and economically-sustainable aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico exclusive economic zone, consistent with the goals of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council approved the FMP for submission and review by the Secretary at its January 2009 meeting. NOAA Fisheries Service is currently reviewing the amendment and proposed rule.

Spiny Lobster Joint Amendment: The amendment established a minimum import size for spiny lobsters coming into the United States. Public hearings were held in July 2008. Following approval by all three southeastern fishery management councils, the amendment was submitted for review by the Secretary. The amendment was approved on December 22, 2008, and a final rule implementing this action published in the *Federal Register* on January 12, 2009, effective February 11, 2009.

Framework Action to Revise the List of Allowable Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs): NOAA Fisheries Service published regulations restricting the allowable placement of fisheye-type BRDs to less than 9 feet from the cod end tie off rings, and decertifying the Expanded Mesh BRD. The effective date for these changes was delayed until May 18, 2009, to allow the industry time to make the necessary adjustments.

Reef Fish Bottom Longline Emergency Rule: At its January 2009 meeting, the Council requested NOAA Fisheries Service enact emergency regulations prohibiting the use of bottom longlines to fish for reef fish in waters shallower than 50 fathoms east of Cape San Blas, Florida. In addition, once the deep water grouper and tilefish fisheries quotas are met, all bottom longlining for reef fish east of Cape San Blas would be prohibited. This request is in response to a September 2008 report by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center indicating interactions with turtles by this segment of the reef fish fishery has far exceeded the take allowed under the current biological opinion for the fishery. NOAA Fisheries Service is currently considering this request, and has reinitiated a consultation on the fishery.

Protected Resources Division

TED Rule Changes: NOAA Fisheries Service is currently drafting regulations to permit new materials and designs as approved TEDs in the shrimp fishery. Additionally, NOAA Fisheries Service is currently considering several changes to the existing TED regulations, which could potentially apply TED requirements to additional fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico and along the Atlantic coast.

NOAA Fisheries Budget Updated

L. Simpson provided a hand-out on the House Disaster Relief and Recovery Supplemental Appropriations. This provided disaster relief for Hurricane Ike and Gustav. It provided \$75M to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for disasters that were declared under both Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (M-SFCMA) and the

Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act. These funds were for national distribution. Louisiana received \$40M and Texas received \$7M. The balance of the \$75M was directed at the Chesapeake for blue crabs, the Northeast for ground fish, (cod, haddock, etc.), and salmon on the West Coast.

Simpson provided a hand-out on the Houses' version of NMFS budget that was just passed. He pointed out a few items of interest to the Gulf. The budget provided \$40,504M for annual stock assessments and to improve data collection. This is an increase of \$8.5M. The Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions were funded at \$27.289M. Fisheries Statistics was funded at \$15,868M, an increase of \$3M. Budget information was provided for various Gulf programs and Commission programs.

Report on Louisiana Hurricane Relief Activities – Past, Present and Future

K. Van Orsdel gave the Commissioners a PowerPoint presentation. In September 2008, Louisiana's fisheries sustained over \$250M in damages from Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. This was in addition to the \$500M in damages from Hurricane Katrina and Rita in 2005. He described various programs in Louisiana that are assisting with recovery efforts and provided financial information on how much was received and expended to date.

Department of Commerce(DOC)NOAA/NOAA Fisheries Leadership Update

L. Simpson reported that President Obama announced Wednesday, February 25, 2009 that former Washington State Governor Gary Locke is his nominee for Secretary of the DOC. Dr. Jane Lubchenco was named as nominee for Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator of NOAA. Final confirmation on these nominees has not yet taken place. L. Simpson provided an organizational chart for NOAA Fisheries. Dr. James Balsiger is Acting Assistant Administrator.

Discussion of Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) Schedule

L. Simpson reported that SEDAR is a peer review of science in regards to stock assessments. There are several species of interest. Of particular interest in GOM is menhaden. Menhaden is scheduled for a SEDAR review and update in 2011. The last stock assessment was 2007, with data through 2004. It is important to get this stock assessment done. Dr. Doug Vaughn who has worked on menhaden stock assessment in the past, is still available and his expertise in this area is vital. Current management needs require a full SEDAR peer review.

Discussion of State Dues

L. Simpson provided written background information on State Dues. He stated that dues had not been increased since October 1993. That increase took place over two years and only applied to the States of Alabama and Mississippi. Prior to that an increase took place in 1981 and also in 1976. He stated that in the current financial environment an increase request may not be prudent. This information was provided for consideration and at the request of the Executive Committee at their October 2008 meeting. He will put this item on the agenda at a later and more appropriate date for full discussion.

Update on 2009 Recreational Red Snapper Season

R. Crabtree stated that the current season opened in Federal waters on June 1, 2008 and closed early on August 5, 2008. The quota was overrun even with the early closure by approximately 25%. Part of the reason is that the average size of the fish being landed is about 20% higher than previous years. This may be due in part to a reduce bag limit resulting in fishermen taking only the larger fish. Florida has changed their State water season to June 1 through September 30. This will provide a good analysis of what the expected catches will be this year. NOAA Fisheries are still waiting on data from Texas and the landings from the headboat survey. His expectation is that even with Florida's shortened season he anticipates a closure date of sometimes in August. If some unexpected data from Texas and the headboat survey come in, that could change things. Florida has indicated that if Federal Waters close early, they may also be willing to close early if that would mean the Federal season could be lengthened. He thought that was a strong possibility.

He hopes to have a notice published in the *Federal Register* by April to provide projected estimates of any early closure, based on updated recreational landings, and the level of compatibility of state regulations.

An update of the stock assessment is scheduled for the second half of 2009. That will be presented to the Gulf Council in October 2009. He expects that they will be revising the regulations and potentially revising the building plan at that time.

M. Jackson asked what the average weight of red snapper was. **R. Crabtree** stated that it was 3-4 lbs. **M. Jackson** that if the recreational fisheries is controlled by bag limit how is the commercial fisheries quota determined. **R. Crabtree** replied that in 2007 NOAA Fisheries put in place an individual fishing quota program for the commercial fishery, which means there are about 500 fishermen who can catch a specified amount of red snapper. This information is tracked by a web based reporting system. The commercial fishery caught 97% of their quota for 2008, and were below their quota in 2007 as well. The real problem is in the recreational fishery. They have been over their quota by about 1 million lbs each year since they have reduced the quotas. **M. Jackson** asked what percentage of the total pounds allowed to be harvested is commercial versus recreational. On paper it is supposed to be 51% commercial and 49% percent recreational. In reality, it is working out to be approximately 65 to 70% recreational because they run over their quota by about 50%.

Great Flood of 2008

L. Simpson reported on the damages caused by a broken water pipe in the Commission office on December 14, 2008. He provided detailed invoices of the repairs and replacement cost as well as a slide show of the damage. Approximately 1,600 gallons of water needed to be removed and blowers and dryers were used to dry the entire first floor of the Commission building. The Commission insurance covered all damage and replacement costs.

Economic Data Program (EDP) Report

Alex Miller provided a written report and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Commission's EDP, which was formed in July of 2008. Current projects include an Economic Survey of the Inshore Shrimp Fleet; an Economic Survey of Fishing-related Business; and, Marine Angler Expenditure Survey.

Other projects he is working on include the development and implementation of informational collection on public attitudes, knowledge, and use patterns of coastal and marine ecosystems; the influence of fuel price on marine recreational angler effort; and, a Gulf States Fisheries Economic Workshop. The first workshop will be held later this week.

The EDP is still in its initial planning and development phase. As the surveys and studies are completed and data and model results become available **A. Miller** provide detailed reports.

SEAMAP Program Report

J. Rester reported that in FY2008, the entire SEAMAP program received \$4.392 million. The House's Final FY2009 budget had SEAMAP funded at \$5.098 million. The final amount SEAMAP will receive has yet to be determined.

The 2002 SEAMAP Environmental and Biological Atlas was published last year. The Marine Directory was published earlier this year. The SEAMAP FY2008 Joint Annual Report was also published this year.

SEAMAP data management activities are running smoothly. The Commission assumed SEAMAP data management responsibilities last summer. **Lloyd Kirk** was hired as the SEAMAP data manager last August. Since that time he has familiarized himself with SEAMAP data and the SEAMAP data entry programs. He has developed new methods for importing data in the database that also does a better job of validating the data before it is loaded in the database. He has loaded new data and fulfilled several data requests.

Since the last Commission meeting, SEAMAP has finished sampling for the 2008 inshore longline survey, the 2008 Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, and the 2009 Winter Shrimp/Groundfish Survey. The Winter Plankton Survey is currently taking place and the Spring Plankton Survey will soon take place.

Sport Fish Restoration Program Report (SFP)

J. Ballard provided a written report of SFP activities for spring 2009. He discussed activities of the TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee and the various State activities

A joint meeting of the Atlantic Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Artificial Reef Subcommittee and the TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee will be held in fall 2009.

Fisheries Information Network (FIN) Report

D. Donaldson provided a written report on current program activity as well as a power point presentation on 2008 FIN activities.

The FIN data management system has loaded almost 23 million records, which include commercial data (trip tickets) from 1985-2008; biological data from 2002-2007; and, recreational catch and effort data from 1981-2007. This system has been online since July 2002.

Commercial trip ticket programs have been fully implemented in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida. Mississippi has implemented oyster, bait shrimp and finfish. They continue to work on other fisheries in the future. Electronic trip ticket reporting currently has over 450 dealers on-line.

Under recreational catch and effort over 43,000 interviews have been conducted in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. They have exceeded 2008 quotas for all modes by approximately 20%.

Biological sampling projects have collected almost 47,000 otoliths for over 90 species. This is for both commercial and recreational sampling.

Habitat Program Report

J. Rester reported that the Council's three Habitat Advisory Panels met last November and December. The Texas Habitat AP discussed the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program, issues facing the Texas oyster fishery, a spotted sea trout consumption advisory for Galveston Bay, Hurricane Ike impacts to habitat, an update on the Matagorda Ship Channel, and the Old River Cove restoration project. The Louisiana/Mississippi Habitat AP discussed the Donaldsonville to the Gulf levee project, Hurricane Gustav and Ike impacts to habitat, monitoring results from the 2008 Bonnet Carré Spillway opening, open water disposal of dredge material in Mississippi Sound, and an update on the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Project. The Florida/Alabama Habitat AP discussed building living shorelines, permit conditions and expansion of large area reef sites off Florida, examining the ecological and fishery function of artificial reefs in the north central Gulf of Mexico, the proposed Port Dolphin LNG Facility, and establishing penalties for seagrass scarring in Florida.

As stated at the last meeting, the TORP LNG facility proposed to be located 63 miles off of Alabama withdrew their deepwater port license application under threat of veto from the Governor of Alabama. TORP has met with resource agencies to discuss resubmitting their application for a closed loop facility that would use an ambient air vaporizer. TORP would not store the natural gas on site. All the gas would be vaporized on site and put directly into a gas pipeline.

The Port Dolphin LNG facility off Tampa is still on hold in the permitting process. The project has been on hold since June 2008. Coast Guard has been working with Port Dolphin to analyze a new pipeline route that would avoid sand resources that local municipalities use for beach re-

nourishment. A Federal Environmental Impact Statement should be coming out sometime this summer.

In December, the Texas Offshore Port Crude Oil Deepwater Port was proposed to be located 30 miles off Freeport, Texas in 130 feet of water. The Port would handle 1.7 million barrels of oil per day. The Coast Guard and MARAD have recently requested NEPA scoping comments on the project. The facility and vessels could potential use to 63 million gallons of water per day. The DEIS should have more specifics on the project and potential impact on fisheries.

The Commission's Aquaculture project has been extended until the end of the year. The contractor on the copepod production system portion of the project had problems last year and would like to produce copepods across an entire growing season this summer.

The Commission's Bottom Mapping Project will be finished by the end of the month. The contractor finally finished up the metadata in January. The final report is almost complete and the data and metadata will soon be distributed through various outlets.

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Program Report

J. Ballard provided a written report in the Commissioner's Briefing Book. He discussed various meetings that he attended since the last meeting. He updated the Commissioners on the various States' ANS Plans. Florida and Louisiana have completed plans and are actively implementing them. South Carolina has sent their final plan out for review. Mississippi and Texas will soon submit a final draft of their plans to the ANS Task Force. Alabama and Georgia have finished making corrections and are ready to a revised draft to the Task Force for final review. He hopes that all states will have completed plans by the end of 2009.

Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP I & II) Report

R. Hode updated the Commissioners on EDRP I and II with a written report and a power point presentation. He discussed accomplishments by project and reported on reimbursement by project.

Expenditures under EDRP I from September 2006 through February 2009, amount to approximately \$51.7 million, or about 40 percent of the first grant in the amount of \$127 million. Under EDRP II the majority of spending to date was for assistance to fishermen and assistance to business and industry. He provided the following table to reflect these expenses.

Element	Totals Reimburse to date	Totals Budgeted	
TED-BRD Compliance	\$864,219	\$1,942,460	44.5%
Asst. to Fishermen	37,066,586	49,813,631	74.4%
Asst. To Bus and Industry	9,253,420	27,473,000	33.7%
Domestic Prod. Marketing	143,954	1,843,909	7.8%
Seafood Testing	133,782	442,000	30.2%

Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF)

S. VanderKooy gave a status report of the various IJF projects. The Oyster FMP and the Arenarius Profile are underway, but progress has been slowed due to budget restrictions. He gave an update on the activities of the TCC Crab Subcommittee and LEC.

He reported that the following publications have been completed: *The 2007 Annual Report of the GSMFC, License and Fees and Law Summary*. All GSMFC publications are available online at the Commission's website.

The Charles H. Lyles Award Recipient Selection

D. Diaz moved to nominate **Corky Perret**. **B. Gautreaux** seconded. There was a great deal of discussion regarding Mr. Perret's contribution to marine fisheries. **The motion was approved by unanimous acclamation and Corky Perret will be the 2009 recipient of the Charles H. Lyles Award.**

C. Perret thanked the Commissioners and others for the nomination. **Mr. Perret** will be retiring from the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources in June 2009.

State Director's Reports

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

The Florida Legislature convened its 2009 session on 3 March. As are other states, Florida is facing serious budget issues – specifically a projected deficit of \$5-\$7 billion for the coming year on top of current year reductions. The FWC may see further reductions in funds which support land management, resource management and land acquisition projects as well as loss of some positions. The Commission is requesting that the 2009 Legislature repeal the statutory language that exempts resident saltwater anglers fishing from shore or structure affixed to shore from holding a recreational saltwater license. This proposal was submitted for legislative consideration in 2007 and 2008 but not acted upon.

The fees for most recreational saltwater fishing licenses increased late last year. For example, the cost of an annual resident license went from \$12 to \$15.50 [includes \$1 for the agent issuing the license], an annual non-resident license from \$30 to \$45.50, a non-resident 7-day license from \$15 to \$28.50. The fees for lifetime, charter/for hire and pier licenses did not increase. The fees for saltwater fishing licenses are now tied to the Consumer Price Index and will be automatically reviewed at five year intervals. The Commission is also promoting the purchase of a saltwater fishing license by persons who either don't fish or are exempt from the requirement to hold a license but want to support conservation and management of marine resources. And anglers purchasing a fishing license are being asked if they would like to make a donation to support the Commission's Youth Hunting and Fishing Initiative, which will provide activities designed to get kids fishing and hunting.

The Commission's Division of Law Enforcement successfully completed the process to attain accreditation; the Division received recognition for their achievement in a ceremony in Tampa on 25 February. Their accreditation was certified by the independent Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation (CFA), which evaluated compliance with more than 250 prescribed standards during on-site inspections. The very thorough inspections included, but were not limited to a review of records management protocols, protocols for storing and securing evidence, equipment – availability and condition, and officer training – requirements, protocols, proficiency. The Division will be re-evaluated by the CFA every three years to maintain their accreditation status.

The eight year saga of the *General Hoyt S. Vandenberg*, a 520 ft. former missile tracking ship, continues. Last June the Norfolk shipyard filed a Motion for Interlocutory Sale of the vessel to recover the increasing cost of storage. In November a federal court authorized the sale to recover \$1.6 million in overdue bills. In mid-December the First State Bank of the Florida Keys purchased the vessel for \$1.36 million at a public auction on behalf of the City of Key West. The Court authorized transfer of the vessel title to the City in February 2009 and the vessel has been moved from the shipyard to a contractor's site for the final clean up and preparation for the tow to Key West later this month. It's hoped that deployment will occur sometime in May (it must occur before hurricane season). Anticipated total cost for preparation and deployment of this vessel is nearly \$8 million with \$4 million provided through Monroe County, \$1.6 million from the Governor through the Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development, \$1.2 million from MARAD, and \$1 million from the FWC Artificial Reef Program.

Recent Commission regulatory actions include but are not limited to:

- Approval (December 2008) of amendments to the Commission's reef fish rule that establish a two fish bag and two month closure [February 1 – March 31] for the recreational gag grouper fishery in Florida's Gulf waters, excluding Monroe County. These amendments are consistent with regulations for this grouper in the Gulf federal waters.
- Approval of rule amendments to increase the recreational bag limit of Gulf red grouper from one fish to two per person within a five fish aggregate, increase the minimum size for greater amberjack from 28 to 30 inches, and increase the commercial and recreational size limit on gray triggerfish from 12 to 14 inches.
- With reference to red snapper, in February 2008 the Commission applied the two fish bag limit in effect for federal waters to state waters but, at the urging of Panhandle stakeholders, retained the April 1 – October 31 state fishing season. In December 2008 stakeholders requested the Commission reconsider implementing the shorter fishing season of June 1 – September 30 to be consistent with the red snapper season in adjacent federal waters. In February 2009 the Commission established the four month red snapper season for state waters of the Gulf.
- Approval (February 2009) of revisions to the Marine Life rules, which regulate harvest of marine fish, invertebrates and plants for the aquarium trade. Ten species, one genus and

one family were added to the list of designated Marine Life organisms (bringing the total to over 600 the species designated as "Marine Life"), size limits for some species were revised [e.g., a 12" maximum length for parrotfish], a limit of five specimens of a species within in an aggregate bag limit of 20 specimens was established for the recreational marine life fishery, and daily possession or vessel limits were established for other species [e.g., bag limits of 400 each for dwarf seahorses and emerald crabs; the bag limit for *Condylactis* anemones was reduced from 400 to 200]. These revisions were based on recommendations from an advisory board comprised of commercial and recreational representatives and subsequent input from the public. [Note: a Tiered Marine Life endorsement and Restricted Species endorsement on the commercial fishing license are required for harvest and sale of those saltwater organisms designated as "restricted Marine Life species". Non-designated species may be harvested and sold with only a commercial Saltwater Products License. The number of Tiered Marine Life endorsements that may be issued is currently capped at less than 200.]

- Repeal (February 2009) of the moratorium on reduction of the number spiny lobster traps that could be used in the fishery, which had been in place since 2003. The number of traps a fisher can use is governed by the number of trap certificates the person holds; the trap certificates are transferable at "market price". At the time of transfer there will be a 10% reduction in the number of certificates transferred if the transfer is to someone other than an immediate family member [i.e., a seller transfers 100 certificates, the buyer receives 90]. The Commission also specified that reduction would cease when a base of 400,000 traps was reached.
- Approved a rule defining the process for assessment of administrative penalties authorized in statute for specified violations of blue crab regulations.
- Established six ten day regional closures for the blue crab fishery during which time traps and trap debris left in the water will be retrieved by Commission staff, commercial blue crabbers, and volunteer coastal clean-up organizations.

Alabama – **C. Denson** presented a report on behalf of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Marine Resource Division (ADCNR, MRD).

Biological Section

Alabama Marine Resources (AMRD) distributed just under \$6.4 million to Alabama seafood related business as part of EDRP II. A total of 64 Alabama seafood related businesses who submitted applications to AMRD received a one time payment equal to 15% of their reviewed physical, inventory and sales losses.

AMRD continues the first and second rounds of commercial and for-hire fishermen data sheets as part of EDRP. Commercial participants have submitted \$28,400 of data sheets for the first round and \$351,400 for the second round since January 2009. Commercial program totals are \$2,885,200 for the first round and \$553,200 for the second round. For-hire vessel owners have submitted data sheets in the amounts of \$600 for round one and \$106,800 for round two allocations in January 2009. For-hire program totals are \$870,200 for the first round and

\$248,200 for the second round through January 2009.

AMRD distributed monies to commercial gillnet fishermen that opted to participate in a buy out program prompted by CCA driven legislation. Enrollment into the program ended on March 2, 2009. Out of 140 eligible fishermen, 47 (34%) retired their licenses under the program at the cost of \$2.12 million. These fishermen contributed to 40% of Alabama's 2008 gill net landings. Monetary compensation was determined using landings values reported through Alabama's commercial trip ticket program. In accordance with Section 4 of Alabama Act No. 2008-467, fishermen whose three year (2005-2007) annual sum was less than \$4,999.99 were eligible for a one-time payment of \$6,000.00. Fishermen whose three year (2005-2007) annual sum was greater than \$5,000.00 but less than \$19,999.99 were eligible for a one-time payment of 200% of their single highest year's total dockside values. Fishermen whose three year (2005-2007) annual sum was greater than \$20,000.00 were eligible for a one-time payment of 125% of their single highest year's total dockside values.

Using Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP) funds, ADCNR/State Lands Division has developed plans to restore approximately 16 acres of marsh along 5000' of eroded shoreline west of the Bayou La Batre ship channel in Mississippi Sound. Sediment will be dredged from nearby areas and planted with appropriate marsh grasses to provide habitat and stabilization. Plans also include the use of wave attenuating devices to protect the new shoreline.

AMRD is in the planning phase of a second round of data sheets for commercial oystermen. Previously implemented plans had to be modified due to impacts of drought and related oyster drill predation. Oystermen will now be sampling to monitor recovery efforts of previous cultch planting efforts. This effort is scheduled to begin by the end of the March.

Worked with the department of health to sample oyster reefs in western portion of Mobile Bay from Fowl River to the Arlington Channel for pesticides, PCB's and other deleterious substances currently classified as prohibited per FDA guidelines as part of a potential relay project for recovery of the oyster reefs.

AMRD staff continues to work with other Department of Conservation personnel in the development of a plan to reef the damaged Gulf State Park Pier. AMRD will create artificial reefs from materials recovered from the demolition of the old pier and pre-fabricated concrete pyramid reefs. These reefs will be placed offshore and within a 300 foot no boating zone around the new pier to enhance fishing opportunities of pier fishermen. Work is scheduled to begin in March 2009.

Staff from AMRD held a meeting with members of the United States Army Corps of Engineers - Mobile District office to discuss the offshore artificial reef program administered by AMRD through a permit issued by the USACE-Mobile office. It was held to familiarize new USACE staff on the history of artificial reef construction off Alabama and the permitting process as well as changes made to the reef construction protocol and approved materials list. This information was provided to address specific questions USACE - Mobile staff had about Alabama's artificial reef program as part of an internal review process regarding reef building activities within the

Gulf of Mexico.

AMRD staff collected biological information from 27 species of fish in 2008 and 1,295 otoliths. It is anticipated all otoliths will be processed, aged, and entered into an electronic database for submission to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission prior to 1 April 2009. AMRD staff has begun to use the new web-based data entry program for otoliths collected in 2009 and will work with GSMFC staff to work out any possible glitches in the program.

In 2008, AMRD staff collected 2,602 recreational angler interviews as part of the Marine Recreational Information Program. All National Marine Fisheries Service wave quotas were met except shore mode in Wave 6 and private/rental mode in Waves 1 and 6. AMRD participated in recent MRIP data review meetings.

AMRD is working with Departmental staff to stop the sale of paper saltwater fishing. Beginning September 1, 2009, it is anticipated that all Alabama saltwater fishing licenses will be issued and stored electronically.

Steve Heath, AMRD Chief Biologist, retired effective February 28, 2009.

Mark Van Hoose, AMRD Oyster Biologist, retired effective January 31, 2009.

Enforcement Section

Major Chris Blankenship has been promoted to the position of Chief Enforcement Officer for the Alabama Marine Resources Division.

The Enforcement section has been checking IFQ Red Snapper Boats landing in Alabama. The three hour notification system has continued to improve. At this point officers are inspecting the majority of the IFQ fishermen landing in Alabama.

The Enforcement Section's public outreach efforts have continued with numerous meetings with commercial and recreational fishermen and participation in the Mobile Boat Show.

All Alabama Marine Resources officers received ruggedized laptop computers for use in their vehicles and vessels. These computers will be used for NCIC checks, instant notification of complaints, weekly and daily reports, and other needs. The Marine Resources Division is currently working with the University of Alabama and the Administrative Office of Courts to develop an e-citation program.

A regulation has been approved by the Conservation Advisory Board that would bring our current "Saltwater Fish, Creel, Bag, Possession, and Size Limits" in line with federal regulations concerning the size limit for commercial red grouper, and the size limit for recreational bonnet head sharks. This regulation would also remove the size limit for commercial sharks. This regulation would bring the creel limits for bonnet head sharks and recreational grouper in line with changes made to the federal regulations.

A regulation has been approved by the Conservation Advisory Board that would require that all fish be landed with head and fins intact, regardless of where they were taken. Sharks, swordfish and tuna can be landed in the form allowed by federal regulations.

A regulation has been approved by the Conservation Advisory Board that would make changes to the "Use of Gill Nets and Harvest of Mullet" regulation. This regulation would make it illegal to display an invalid gill net placard, close certain areas to the use of gill nets, require all gill nets and seines to have floats at no greater than prescribed intervals, and prohibit the possession of recreational gill nets more than 300 feet from shore.

A regulation has been approved by the Conservation Advisory Board that would better define the public access areas and would better regulate the activity in these areas.

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

The Office of Marine Patrol, Marine Law Enforcement activities for October 2008 – February 2009 consisted of 689 sea hours with 627 contacts which resulted in 25 total citations. These citations mostly consisted of violations concerning red snapper and sharks.

Shrimp season closed at midnight, December 31, 2008 except south of the Intracoastal Waterway. All state waters will close to shrimping activities except live bait shrimping at midnight, April 30, 2009. 2008 landings of 4.6 million lbs. (headless) are down from Pre-Katrina levels.

The EDRP II Shrimp Fishery Monitoring Program accepted trip tickets through October 15 2008. A total of 6281 fishery tickets were submitted by over 300 resident shrimpers who provided detailed harvest information; these fishermen have been paid approximately \$2.4 million. Data compilation and analysis is on-going. Four Shrimp EDRP wire fraud cases (falsification of trip tickets) have resulted in guilty pleas and restitution ordered (\$36,340 total). Two additional cases are on-going.

A crab trap closed season and volunteer derelict trap cleanup will not be held in 2009. However, staff has continued to monitor efforts for derelict traps by side scan sonar detection and has picked up 154 lost traps. Since 1999, the MS Derelict Crab Trap Cleanup has yielded over 17,000 derelict crab traps recovered and recycled, with over 12,000 of those traps being recovered by storm-affected commercial fishermen participating in EDRP programs. The cleanup has been a cooperative effort of MS commercial fishermen, MDMR, and Gulf Coast Research Lab (GCRL). For these efforts the MS program has been awarded a First Place 2008 EPA Gulf of Mexico Program Gulf Guardian Award, which was presented at the EPA Partnerships in Action 20th Anniversary Celebration, October 29 in New Orleans.

The DMR Shrimp & Crab Bureau is partnering with the MS Gulf Coast National Heritage Area (MGCNHA) and MS-AL Sea Grant Consortium to record oral histories as an educational video to tell the story of Mississippi's seafood industry. On-going interviews of local fishing

community icons began November 3, 2008. The video should be available for distribution sometime in May 2009.

The MS Crab Task Force continues to work with the Gulf Regional Diamondback Terrapin Work Group to address incidental terrapin catch in crab traps and is now voluntarily installing TEDs in their traps (2300+ to date). DMR staff has worked cooperatively with both groups to encourage trap TED use and help with installation. Additionally, outreach to MS recreational crabbers and trap builders has resulted in 350 TED's being placed in crab traps.

The DMR Real-Time Hydrological Monitoring Program has rebuilt two historically important Western Sound stations (lost in Katrina) used specifically in monitor conditions around productive oyster reefs. Data from all twelve stations can be found at www.dmr.ms.gov.

On February 20, DMR and partners held the second in a series of seminars with the goal of enhancing familiarity between interested groups and increasing awareness of the programs, needs and opportunities that are relevant to marine research in Mississippi waters. "Hypoxia in the Mississippi Bight" was the subject of the seminar. The first seminar, "Managing Mississippi's Oyster Resource & Associated Monitoring" was held November 7. Attendance at both seminars was excellent.

The Mississippi's Artificial Reef Program is currently working with the Hancock County Port and Harbor Commission on a staging site in Hancock County for the old Highway 90 Bridge rubble. This material will be stored, crushed, loaded, and barged out from this site to artificial reef sites for future deployments.

The Artificial Reef Bureau has also been working with local contractor's to get donated concrete material (concrete culverts, concrete rubble, and concrete light pole anchors) delivered to the Gulfport Staging Site. There were 3 steel hull vessels and 160 Reef Balls deployed during this time frame in reef sites south of both Horn and Ship Island. These vessels were donated by the U.S. Coast Guard. A local contractor was hired to clean and deploy these vessels.

The 2009 site plans for inshore reef construction is complete. The creation and enhancing of 18 inshore reefs sites thought out the 3 coastal counties will be done with the use of 21,000 tons of crushed concrete.

The Mississippi Artificial Reef Rigs to Reef Program is currently working with a petroleum industry representative on a project in the main pass area south of Mississippi. Reef permits were obtained and the deployment should begin in early summer.

There are 56 charter boat operators under contract in the EDRP II program. Captains turned in reports on a monthly basis through January 2009. There have been 1525 fisheries recovery reports submitted under the EDRP II program. Data is being scanned into a database and checked for errors. Some preliminary analysis has been conducted on the 4828 fisheries recovery reports received in the EDRP I program which concluded in May of 2008.

Fifty commercial fishermen have signed contracts to participate in fisheries recovery monitoring under the EDRP II program, which began March 15, 2008. As of January 31, 2009, 996 commercial finfish fishermen trips have been reported. The commercial fisheries recovery report program is ongoing with EDRP II funds.

New recreational fishing records for Oct. 08 through Feb. 09 are:

Conventional Tackle

Bank Seabass: 9.6 oz

Ladyfish: 3lbs 9.28 oz

Fly Fishing Tackle

Florida Pompano: 3lbs 12.8 oz

Oyster Season began Sept. 25, 2008. Through February 14, 2009, **313,622** sacks of oysters have been harvested from **13,167** boat trips.

An Oyster Stewardship Program meeting was held on October 15, 2008 at the MDMR Bolton Building with Mississippi dealers and processors. 5dealers/processors and 7 staff were in attendance. Items on the agenda that were discussed were the 2008 oyster season update, restoration activities, and changes in FDA *V.p/V.v* regulations, experimental harvest limits and a moratorium in license sales. On October 21, 2008 the Oyster Stewardship meeting was held at the GCRL. 36 Mississippi oyster harvesters were in attendance as well as 8 MDMR staff and 2 MDMR marine patrol officers. Agenda items covered were similar to those discussed at the dealer/processor meetings.

The Oyster Stewardship Program Harvesters meeting was held January 13, 2009 and the West Harrison County Civic Center. 69 harvesters and 8 staff attended. Robert Ricks did a presentation on at home weather stations. Items discussed were issues concerning the Mississippi oyster industry. DMR Personnel continues to monitor and assess the oyster resources by taking oyster samples by dredges and mapping areas using GPS and ArcMap GIS software. MDMR staff are working on setting up the Gulf and South Atlantic Shellfish Conference in April.

Louisiana – **J. Shepard** presented a report on behalf of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF).

J. Shepard did not review the status of disaster recovery in Louisiana since K. Van Orsdel had already done an in depth presentation. He stated that they have learned a lot about how to process the disaster funds in a timely manner and to get it to the fishermen and other areas in fisheries where it is needed.

The LDWF established a Saltwater Recreational Fish Task Force. The first meeting was last week. The Task Force is composed of representatives from the charter boat industry, Coastal Conservation Association, marina owners, divers, tackle manufacturers, distributors, boat dealers, etc. All members attended. Biologist, economist and enforcement personnel also sit on the Task Force. The Task Force is designed to make recommendations to the LDWF based on saltwater recreational fishing.

The LDWF's budget took a 5 percent cut in this year's budget and anticipates another 5 percent cut next year. This will cause the loss of 6 positions in LDWF. The department is looking at ways at to reorganize to deal with the tight financial situation in the State. One way is to take similar divisions (from inland and marine fisheries) and bring them together and forming a Research and Assessment Division. **J. Shepard** will head up this new division. There will now be 3 divisions in the Office of Fisheries. The Marine Lab will go online in June 2009. One of the major things he will be dealing with is education and outreach.

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

REGULATORY ISSUES - During November 2008 to early January 2009, Coastal Fisheries hosted 10 public scoping meetings plus commercial and recreational workgroup meeting to discuss potential changes to existing flounder and other regulations. During these coastwide meetings, staff presented recent data trends regarding the flounder fishery and sought input regarding regulations or strategies for managing the fishery, which has declined significantly since 1982. After the flounder meetings, regulations to address flounder concerns were proposed at the TPW Commission meeting in January 2009.

In January, the TPWD Commission moved three Coastal Fisheries proposals from the Statewide Hunting and Fishing Proclamation to the Texas Register. The proposals deal with flounder, federal consistency issues for sharks and other species, and a paddle craft licensing and training proposal. Long-term downward trends in the flounder abundance warranted a complete closure to all gears during the month of November and a year-round reduction in daily bag limit from 10 to 5 for recreational and from 60 to 30 for commercial take. The anticipated effect of this regulation on southern flounder after one generation (6 years) is an increased spawning stock biomass (102.5%) and decreased harvest by numbers (45.0%) and weight (36.5%). The minimum size limit will remain 14 inches for both recreational and commercial fishermen.

Coastal fisheries continues to look at several species managed jointly with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council to become more consistent by matching bag and size limits for sharks, greater amberjack (increasing the minimum size limit for Greater amberjack from 32 inches to 34 inches TL), gag grouper (establishing a minimum size limit of 22 inches and bag limit of 2 per person with the possession limits being twice the daily bag limit), and gray triggerfish (establishing a minimum size limits of 14 inches TL and bag limit of 20 per person with the possession limits being twice the daily bag limit). TPWD proposed to change the minimum length limit for all shark species from 24 inches TL to 64 inches TL, except for Atlantic sharpnose, blacktip, and bonnethead sharks which will retain the current 24 inches TL minimum length limit. For the allowable shark species, the bag limit will remain 1 fish per person per day and a 2 fish possession limit. In addition, TPWD will match the federal prohibited shark list (zero bag limit) that includes: Atlantic angel, basking, bigeye sand tiger, bigeye sixgill, bigeye thresher, bignose, Caribbean reef, Caribbean sharpnose, dusky, Galapagos, longfin mako narrowtooth, night, porbeagle, sandbar, sand tiger, sevengill, silky, sixgill, smalltail, whale, and white.

TPWD also proposes to create a "Paddlecraft Guide License" that would allow for paddle craft operators to receive a saltwater guide license by establishing a different set of requirements other

than a United States Coast Guard (USCG) Operator of an Uninspected Passenger Vessel license. As indicated the USCG license current requirements may fail to address the unique safety issues associated with paddle craft and also may be restricting the licensing of paddle craft guides due to the "sea time" requirement. The proposal will create a paddle craft guide license and in order to receive the license the guide will have to show certification or proof of completion for a TPWD boater safety course and a CPR/First Aid training, and completion of the American Canoe Association "Level II Essentials of Kayak Touring" and "Coastal Kayak Trip Leading" courses or a British Canoe Union "Three Star Sea Kayak" and "Four Star Leader Sea Kayak" courses.

During February 2009, the department held more comprehensive statewide public scoping meetings involving regulatory proposals by all divisions.

MENHADEN TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH - In 2008, the TPW Commission established a total allowable catch (TAC) limit on gulf menhaden caught in the Texas Territorial Sea and commercially landed in Louisiana. The TAC went into effect on 1 September 2008 and was set at the previous 5-year (2002-2006) average of 31.5 million pounds per year. The upcoming 2009 fishing season will be the first fishing season this regulation will apply. The regulation is a precautionary ecosystem-based, predator/prey approach with the management of the menhaden fishery in Texas waters.

COASTAL FISHERIES PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

Life History Research – PRBMFRS - Gray Snapper samples were collected and processed for a life history study.

Routine monitoring otolith collections from gill net samples were continued, as was processing and aging of otoliths collected in previous years. Cedar Lakes resource monitoring using gillnets and bag seines was also continued.

Otoliths from red drum sampled for a genetics project conducted by Dr. John Gold, Texas A&M University were collected, processed and aged.

The GSFC funded FIN-Biological Sampling project for otolith collection and processing for various marine species was continued.

Genetics Research – PRBMFRS - Sample collection and processing for southern flounder and alligator gar genetic variation studies is continuing.

A cooperative effort with Texas A&M University at Galveston involving species identification confirmation of snook species collected in Texas waters was initiated.

Coordination of red drum fin clip collections for a genetics project conducted by Dr. John Gold, Texas A&M University is continuing.

Artificial Reef Project - TPWD is drafting a settlement with Resolve Marine Services to complete 4 reefing projects for Coastal Fisheries as compensation for the Texas Clipper ship being on its side. These projects will involve reefing a tug boat and materials from the Humble Channel Bridge, moving several thousand tons of concrete culverts offshore, and dismantling an obsolete barge that has become too un-seaworthy to reef.

Over 30 oil platforms are TPWD "books" as working donations. This means that some of these donations may not come to fruition because of economic factors and other issues with individual petroleum companies. Coastal Fisheries has received 2 donations since the October 2008 Texas Report.

Biological monitoring on the Texas Clipper is going well, and TPWD received recognition from UT-Brownsville in helping the university begin its first offshore marine research program. There are now 3 graduate students working on master's degree projects at the Clipper.

TPWD Public Television will air 2 Texas Clipper stories on PBS stations on 22 March 2009. This will be the first time that the entire show is dedicated to a specific topic.

Reef staff met with numerous private groups who have expressed interests in participating in public reefing activities. We anticipate their participation within the next several years.

Buyback Programs - Coastal Fisheries is in the application period for the 24th round of the Inshore Shrimp License Management Program, the 10th round for the Crab License Management Program, and the 13th round of the Commercial Finfish License Management Program. Applications will be taken until 13 March 2009.

Fish Stocking Efforts - Sea Center Texas staff spawned, hatched, and reared 7 mm TL Sabine Lake southern flounder that will soon be stocked in an outdoor rearing pond. The flounder were spawned on 6 February 2009 and will be raised to 40-45 mm for release into Sabine Lake.

Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program - The 2009 Crab Trap Removal Program was a great success with 1359 crab traps being removed by 141 volunteers. San Antonio Bay accounted for 998 traps or 73% of the total traps collected. Over 25,000 abandoned crab traps have been since the program began eight years ago.

Oysters - In October 2008, bacteriological tests of oyster growing waters and oyster meats were conducted once waste water treatment plants were back on line in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. Oyster meats were also tested for viruses. All of the samples came back within acceptable limits. However, Galveston Bay and West Galveston Bay did not open to public reef fishermen on 1 November 2008 (the beginning of the public oyster season in TX) because most of the shellfish markers were down as a result of the storm. Bastrop and Christmas Bays and all system south to South Bay did open to oyster harvest on 1 November 2008. Without the markers, the boundaries between approved and unapproved waters were not enforceable therefore the season opening was delayed. Oyster leases in Galveston Bay opened for commercial harvest on November 6 because a requirement of the TPWD Harvest Permit is that corner markers must be in place thus establishing an enforceable boundary. Shellfish markers were replaced by a DSHS contractor and the public season opened the 26th of November.

SPECIAL EFFORTS, STUDIES, AND TOPICS - Texas General Land Office and Texas Department of Transportation have expressed interest in closing Rollover Pass while recreational angler groups are fighting to keep it open. There are pros and cons on both sides of this argument and TPWD is researching the proposed closure and will provide information to address the discussion.

During late 2008, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department went through a legislative Sunset Commission process. In mid-November, staff of the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission

released its report following a review of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The 12-member commission, made up of 10 legislators and two public members, reviews the policies and programs of TPWD, questioning the need for the agency, looked for potential duplication of other public services or programs, and considers new and innovative changes to improve the agency's operations and activities. The agency was generally praised for the work we do and the professionalism we display while performing our mission. There were a few areas of improvement recommended in the Sunset Commission report and the agency agreed the recommendations would help the agency manage natural resources better in the future. The overall tone of the hearing was very favorable for the agency.

Coastal Wetland Planning Protection and Restoration Act Project Funds have been awarded to the Swan Lake Ranch Project to purchase a conservation easement on 3,500 acres of Guadalupe River Delta for whooping crane habitat. TPWD, USFWS, and the Nature Conservancy partnered for this project to complement over 148,000 acres of conservation lands within the Guadalupe River Delta and San Antonio Bay System.

OTHER - Thanks to big-hearted donations from many TPWD employees and outside supporters, the department recently sent grants totaling close to \$117,000 to employees affected by Hurricane Ike. All told, 39 employees applied for relief, and all of them received some level of grant funding. Funds for these grants came from a Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation donation of \$100,000, a Palo Duro Canyon State Park friends' group donation of \$10,000, and donations from many TPWD employees and outside supporters.

M. Jackson briefed the Commissioners on the status of the Galveston/Houston area following Hurricane Ike. **Senator Jackson** district includes southeast Houston through Galveston to Freeport. His district includes 5 ports. Like all of the Gulf States, Texas is facing economic challenges. He serves on the Natural Resource Committee which is over TPWD. Eight-five percent of the homes in his hometown of Shore Acres went under water in varying levels. He received about 19 inches of saltwater from Galveston Bay. There are still many people in this area who are not back in their homes. The City of Galveston received water not only from the Gulf came in the back side of the island during the surge. The largest employer in Galveston, University of Texas Medical Branch(UTMB) (which includes a teaching hospital) had 12,000 employees and had to lay-off about 3,500. There is currently debate going on regarding rebuilding the hospital where it was or elsewhere. He stated that UTMB is the lifeline of the City of Galveston and he and his constituents have made it clear that they want to rebuild with all electrical moved from the basement to a higher floor. He hopes this comes together. They are still working with FEMA and insurance companies. Another problem the area is dealing with is insurance companies not wanting to write any homeowner policies in any area in close proximity to the water. The people of his district are resilient and continue to work hard towards recovery.

Future Meetings

B. Gautreaux reported that the October 2009 meeting will be in Mississippi, the exact location has not been determined. Subsequent to the meeting, a contract was signed with the Imperial Palace Casino, Biloxi, MS. The March 2010 meeting will be hosted in Alabama.

L. Simpson reported that the Commission staff is currently working with NOAA Fisheries to plan and co-sponsor the Biennial National State Marine Fisheries Directors meeting to be held in September 2009.


Publications List

A new listing of publications was provided for informational purposes.

Other Business

J. Shepard discussed the possibility of the Commission establishing a Fisheries Outreach Subcommittee of the TCC. This committee could work with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's newly established committee. **J. Shepard moved to establish this committee. D. McKinney seconded. The motion was approved.**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES
MINUTES
Wednesday and Thursday, April 1-2, 2009
Shreveport, Louisiana**

On Tuesday, March 31, 2009 Panel members participated in a field trip to Lake Caddo to observe invasive plant species as well as some eradication methods. Earl Chilton handled all logistic through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Panel members thanked Chilton for providing this opportunity.

On Wednesday, April 1, 2009, Chairman Earl Chilton called the meeting to order at 8:30 am. The meeting began with introductions of the Panel members and guests. The following were in attendance:

Members and Proxies

Lad Akins, REEF, Key Largo, FL
Diane Altsman, EPA/GOM Program, Stennis Space Center, MS
James Ballard, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Paul Carangelo, Port of Corpus Christi Authority, Corpus Christi, TX
Earl Chilton, TPWD, Austin, TX
Lisa Gonzalez, HARC/Galveston Bay Foundation, The Woodlands, TX
Scott Hardin, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Leslie Hartman, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Dewayne Hollin, Texas Sea Grant, College Station, TX
Chuck Jacoby, University of Florida/Florida Sea Grant, Gainesville, FL
Isis Longo, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Susan McCarthy, FDA, Dauphin Island, AL
Marilyn Barrett O'Leary, At-Large Member, Pontchatoula, LA
Chris Page, SCDNR, West Columbia, SC
Bob Pitman, USFWS, Albuquerque, NM
Steve Rider, ADWFF, Montgomery, AL
Don Schmitz, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL
John Teem, FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, FL
Keith Weaver, GDNR, Social Circle, GA

Staff

Nancy K. Marcellus, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Jacoby Carter, USGS, Lafayette, LA
Amy Richard, UF Center for Aquatic & Invasive Plants, Gainesville, FL
James Seales, LDWF

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Public Comment

Chairman Earl Chilton provided the opportunity for public comment. No public comments were received.

Review and Adoption of Agenda

Scott Hardin made a motion to adopt the agenda. Don Schmitz seconded the motion and the agenda was adopted.

Review and Approval of Minutes

Marilyn O'Leary made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 9-12, 2008 meeting held in Savannah, Georgia. Leslie Hartman seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Northern Louisiana Aquatic Invasive Species Management Overview

James Seales gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Lake Bistineau Update on Giant Salvinia".

Giant Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) General Facts:

- Free-floating aquatic fern native to coastal region of southern Brazil
- Reproduces vegetatively by fragmentation
- Has the ability to double in biomass in 7 to 10 days
- First found in U.S. in South Carolina - 1995
- Found in Toledo Bend - 1998
- 11 states now have infestations
- Initially spread from the aquarium and water garden industry
- Documented in Lake Bistineau - March 13, 2006

Control efforts began shortly after discovery of giant salvinia on Lake Bistineau and included physical removal and herbicide applications. The plants were widely scattered on the lower one third of the lake and it soon became evident that the plants were too widespread for eradication to be a possibility. Giant salvinia covered approximately 500 acres on Lake Bistineau in April of 2007. By December of 2007 salvinia had expanded to cover approximately 4500 acres despite herbicide applications to 4156 acres of giant salvinia on Lake Bistineau. Subfreezing temperatures last winter damaged the salvinia in the open areas. High water during late winter and early spring of 2008 helped reduce the amount of giant salvinia in Lake Bistineau. Intensive large scale herbicide applications were conducted for 2 weeks in April of 2008. Seventeen spray crews from throughout the state treated over 4900 acres of giant salvinia and other aquatic vegetation. Gates were opened on July 15, 2008 to draw Bistineau down for control of giant salvinia. The Lake dewatered slowly at a rate of 2 to 3 inches per day to allow salvinia to strand in place. Giant salvinia will die if

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allowed to thoroughly dry and desiccate. As of October 11, 2008, salvinia coverage following drawdown approximately 730-1,000 acres. Much of the remaining salvinia were found in shallow inaccessible areas where herbicide applications are very difficult. Fluctuating the water level by closing the gates and allowing the lake to partially refill should allow some of the remaining salvinia to drift onto areas that can be dewatered.

Seales also reported that salvinia weevils were initially stocked in two enclosures in August of 2007. The weevils survived through the winter and floating enclosures were constructed to sustain the weevils during a drawdown. It will take 3 to 5 years before any noticeable impact to salvinia on the lake occurs if the weevils adversely affect it at all.

The Natural History of an Urban Nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) Population 2005-2008 and the Implications for Management and Control

Jacoby Carter from the USGS National Wetlands Research Center in Lafayette, Louisiana presented to the Panel.

Nutria are an aquatic rodent from S.A. valued for it's fur. It can weigh up to 17 kg (37 lbs) and has a round tail, orange incisors, webbed feet, and nipples on back. It has a high reproductive rate with an average litter size of 7 to 8, a gestation period of 19 weeks and 3 months to sexual maturity. They are generalist feeders.

The Worldwide Status of Nutria:

- Over exploitation in their native range lead to efforts to raise nutria in captivity in France (1880's) and Argentina (1920's)
- Nutria were first introduced to North America in California (1899) with the first successful captive reproduction in N.A. in Quebec (1927)
- As of 2006 nutria were in 30 countries on 4 continents
- They have been eradicated twice (California, England) and established population had died out in the Scandinavian Countries. Introduced populations have died out on one part of the African Continent but survive in another
- In their native range the primary concern in over exploitation and sustainable harvest.

Nutria can damage the marsh and under some circumstances can cause marsh loss. These areas are often termed "eat outs". Muskrats have also historically caused "eat outs" and at one time nutria were promoted as a better alternative to muskrats. So to some extent, eat outs may be thought of as a natural process.

There are three different control strategies being used in the U.S. for nutria:

1. Use of state trapping regulations. No special incentives. Most states.

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2. Federally funded state run program with incentives to trappers (pay per tail) in Louisiana (south of I-10/I-12 only).
3. Federal (USDA-WS) program to eradicate nutria on the DeMarVa Peninsula (and beyond?).

Carter indicated that observation at the Urban Site started in September 2005 and continues to the present. The primary focus of the study was to test nutria research technology. Population estimation was a secondary goal.

What was done at the Urban Site?

- Mark/Recapture using PIT tags, Hav-a-Heart traps, and a variety of bait.
- Tested two different telemetry systems, GPS and traditional system.
- Sign surveys including noting of scat, observation of feeding, recovery of dead animals.
- Camera trap monitoring.

Problems Encountered: low capture rates and small population size. They observed nutrias and nutria sign throughout the study period, even during times they were not able to capture nutria for mark-recapture.

Significant Observations:

- Nutria feeding on acorns.
- Grass a significant portion of diet (nothing else to eat).
- Population was reproducing at study site, not just transient.
- Average weight lower than at other sites studied.
- Evidence of depredation, most likely by dogs.
- Nutria not in all apparently suitable habitats. Barriers to movements or competitive exclusion?

What do nutria want? Not much - just a place to live with:

Water: A constant source of water (deep enough to swim)

Food: Seem to prefer at least some wetland/aquatic plants, but will even eat lawn grass.

Shelter: A place to dig a burrow.

How do they get there? They can use rivers, streams, coulees, canals, and drainage tunnels as corridors and have been documented reaching islands over 2 miles from shore in the Gulf of Mexico.

What limits their distribution? Unknown but we conjecture weather. Given time and a swimable or walkable water route, they seem to be able to get almost anywhere.

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Summary: Nutria control may need to consider “non-traditional” non-marsh habitat, otherwise reinvasion is likely.

Synopsis of the Rat Lung Worm Study

John Teem presented a Final Report of a 2 year study “Human Health Risks Associated with Channeled Apple Snails in the GSARP Region” to discuss the parasite, *Angiostrongylus cantonesis*. The life cycle of *A. cantonesis* requires infection of a rat host in addition to a snail host. The predominant channeled apple snail in the GSARP region is *Pomacea insularum*.

Assessing the Health Risks Associated with Channeled Apple Snails in the GSARP Region:

- Collect apple snails from New Orleans and Miami, send samples to the CDC in Atlanta to assay for the presence of the rat lung worm using DNA-based detection assays (PCR).
- Develop an in-house capacity to detect the rat lung worm using PCR. Test channeled apple snails from a third location (to be determined).
- Develop a mathematical model to predict the spread of channeled apple snails.

PCR Detection of Rat Lung Worm in Infected Snails:

- Miami: 60 analyzed, all negative
- New Orleans: 60 analyzed, 5 positives.

Mathematical Model Objectives:

- Create partial differential equations that model the diffusion of a species over time through a spatial domain.
- Create a grid of polygons representing the spatial domain, in which each polygon represents a geographic area with specific properties related to the diffusion of the species.
- Model the diffusion of the species through the grid, calibrating the diffusion rate with experimental data.
- Generate new grids using existing GIS data maps.
- Model the effects of biocontrol efforts on spread.

Conclusions:

- Five snails from New Orleans were found to be positive for rat lung worm.
- No samples were positive for the parasite in snails taken from Miami, Florida or Picayune, Mississippi. However, both sites had previously had cases of infected paratenic hosts (a gibbon and a horse, respectively).
- No samples were positive for the parasite in snails taken from Houston, Texas or Everglades National Park, Florida.
- Results suggest that rat lung worm infections of channeled apple snails are not widespread throughout the GSARP region.

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- DNA-based detection assays for the rat lung worm were transferred from the CDC to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
- Additional testing can be performed in the future to better define the geographic distribution of the parasite in the GSARP region.
- A mathematical model was devised for modeling the spread of an invasive species through a spatial domain.
- A software product was produced allowing a user to generate an invasive species diffusion model video for a geographic area.
- http://www.math.fsu.edu/~jgutierrez/jbg_personal/scilab_en.html

Recently an outbreak of the rat lung worm occurred in Hawaii. Two people are in a coma since December of 2008. Infected people ingested raw produce from their gardens that may have had a small infected slug, *Parmarion martensi*, a non-native slug from Asia may be the cause of the recent outbreak. Slugs like *P. martensi* may pose a greater risk than apple snails for transmitting *A. cantonesis* to humans in the GSARP area.

Future Directions:

1. Continue testing samples in other GSARP areas to refine the map.
2. Identify other mollusk species that are infected in the GSARP region.
3. Survey plants imported from Asia or Hawaii for *P. martensi*.

Preliminary Investigation of Island Applesnail (*Pomacea insularum*) Distribution and Control Methods Applicable for Natural Areas in Southern Louisiana

Jacoby Carter - USGS National Wetlands Research Center, Lafayette, Louisiana

Conclusions of the preliminary investigation:

1. The apple snails could become extensively distributed without early intervention.
2. There ARE potential control options and an integrated pest management control approach may be successful. This would include:
 - a. Mechanical and Chemical Control
 - b. Biological Control

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- c. In areas where possible use of saltwater.
3. Two chemical control agents were tested - one approved and one not. Both have their respective advantages and disadvantages.
4. One mechanical and one biological control option were tested (biocontrol selected due to availability for commercial production but others should work).
5. Will test "spray on" molluscicide for egg mass control.

Invasive Plant Education: A Recipe in the Making

Amy Richard - UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants

The Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants (CAIP) was established in 1978 by the Florida legislature. Their goal is to develop environmentally sound techniques for the management of aquatic and natural area weed species and to coordinate aquatic plant research activities within the State of Florida through research, teaching and extension (outreach).

The CAIP serves aquatic and invasive plant researchers (academic, industry, graduate students, and agency managers); natural resource/field personnel, county extension agents, park biologists, teachers, students of all ages, and the general public. Since 1980 they have maintained an Aquatic, Wetland and Invasive Plants Information Retrieval System (APIRS) with more than 71,000 annotated records of scientific literature (<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/APIRS>). Subjects include biological control (6,360), chemical control (8,782), mechanical control (2,418), government control (4,448), utilization, distribution, biology, ecology of aquatic plants, and more.

The primary CAIP website <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu> (since 1995) contains the following:

- Over 600 pages completely revised and updated.
- New data-driven infrastructure.
- 102 plant ID videos online.
- Enhanced navigation, delivery and appearance.
- Invasive Species Management Plans for Florida - added to 42 plant information pages
- Educational products, photographs, and information on 500 plant species.

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In 2005, they launched an education program about native, non-native and invasive plants for use by science teachers and other educators (language arts, social studies, park rangers, etc.). The goals are to capture the attention of educators, their students and eventually their parents; inform them of challenges and costs associated with invasive plants in Florida and around the world; and provide useful information on how they can help. (<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/education>)

Richard indicated that they would be conducting a Plant Camp on June 13, 2009 and invited all Panel members to attend. The goals of the Plant Camp are to create excitement and interest among teachers who will pass it along to students and also assist with curriculum development.

Pitman suggested linking this website to the GSARP website. Schmitz also mentioned the possibility of adding the Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants as a member of the Panel. Since there were no available vacancies to the Panel membership or additional funding to support it, the Panel did not consider membership.

Update on Invasive Lionfish

Lad Akins gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Born in the Wrong Sea... Lionfish in the (tropical) Western Atlantic" and discussed the range of lionfish over the years.

REEF Lionfish Field Operations:

- 18 week-long projects throughout the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, and Cayman Islands
- 220+ volunteers
- Collection/documentation - 3000+ specimens to date
- Education/Outreach via talks and media.

Western Atlantic Sizes:

- Smallest collected = 28mm
- Largest collected = 474mm
- Max size in native range ~320-350mm

Early tagging data:

- 86 fish tagged

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- 14 recovered, 16 sighted
- 30 days - 7 months after tagging
- All at same dive sites
- Growth rates up to ~20cm/yr.

Lev Fishelson, Tel Aviv University was quoted, "*...the majority of the prey [of lionfish] are small-bodied fish (3-5 g body weight), like damselfish, cardinal fish, and anthiases, it is estimated that... [80 lionfish in 1km of reef] will consume over 50,000 fish yr-1.*" (625 fish per year or 2.8 kg per year)

Lionfish reproduction:

- Spawn in pairs
- Lionfish release two buoyant egg balls
- Fecundity is ~30,000 eggs per spawn.

Early Detection, Rapid Response, and Removal Workshops in the Caribbean:

- Bahamas - November 2008
- Turks and Caicos - February 2009
- Cayman Islands - March 2009
- Bonaire - April 2009
- Belize - June 2009

Future Efforts:

- Distribute field guide
- Conduct Florida Keys ED/RR workshops
- Removal effort research and awareness in PR/USVI
- Tagging studies (acoustic and visual)

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- Trapping studies.

For more information: James Morris - NOAA; Lad Akins - REEF; Pam Schofield - USGS; or Stephanie Green - Simon Fraser University.

USFWS Triploid Grass Carp Program Review

Doug Keller, Chairman of the Mississippi River Basin Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species sent a letter to the Regional Panel Chairs, ANSTF, and the AFWA-Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee regarding an external review of the National Triploid Grass Carp Ploidy Inspection and Certification Program.

In 1985 the USFWS established a Triploid Grass Carp Ploidy Inspection and Certification Program (Triploid Program) to provide assurances to state natural resource management agencies that shipments of grass carp alleged to be all triploid do not, within the confidence limits of the Triploid Program, contain diploids. The Triploid Program has evolved from years of cooperation with private grass carp producers, resulting in a set of standards which the FWS uses to implement the Triploid Program.

In August 2008, the USFWS hosted a workshop with the purpose of initiating dialogue among the USFWS, state agencies, and private fish farmers to discuss the Triploid Program and to improve its effectiveness. The discussions and recommendations from the workshop support many of the recommendations in the Plan addressing grass carp and confirm that a review of the Triploid Program is warranted.

The Mississippi River Basin Panel (MRBP) is interested in implementing recommendation in the Plan and has identified the independent scientific review of the Triploid Program as a high priority. The MRBP proposes to work with the other Regional Panels, natural resource managers, grass carp stakeholders and professional societies (e.g. World Aquaculture Society, American Fisheries Society) to develop an evaluation of the production, certification, and shipment of triploid grass carp. The purpose of the review is to provide recommendations, where necessary, to increase effectiveness of each stage in the process of using triploid grass carp as a management tool.

As Chairman of the GSARP, Earl Chilton advised that he will be working on this review with the MRBP and will keep the Panel updated on the progress.

Members Forum

Florida - Scott Hardin reported on the 5th Nonnative Pet Amnesty Day held March 21, 2009 at the Miami MetroZoo. Approximately 500 people attended the event, and 100 animals were surrendered, including 21 snakes, 22 lizards, 40 turtles and tortoises, 7 birds, 8 mammals and 2 fish. Media

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coverage at the Amnesty Day event included local and national news stations, international tv, newspapers and commercial television shows.

Don Schmitz provided the following update on Florida Invasive Plants:

- State budget cuts will likely impact the amount of invasive aquatic plants controlled in Florida during the next few years.
- Isolated (3) *Salvinia molesta* populations have been found and are under treatment in the Panhandle.
- Topramezone, a bleaching herbicide similar to fluridone, is effective on fluridone tolerant hydrilla and is being tested in Florida under an EUP.
- Biological control efforts have failed to find insects/pathogens for hydrilla in Southeast Asia and Africa after several years of searching for biological control agents. These research projects will likely be terminated by July 1, 2009.
- A planthopper insect, *Megamelus scutellaris*, a biological control agent for water hyacinth has been recommended by the USDA Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for field release and likely will be released within the next year or two in Florida.
- Two new plant species have been found in Florida and have become established: *Luziola subintegra* (water grass), a native of South America, rooted in water bodies and creates dense mats, and *Azolla pinnata* (feathered mosquito fern), a native of Southeast Asia and Africa, a floating plant that creates a dense canopy.

Alabama - Steve Rider provided the following update:

Alabama ANS Management Plan

- Submitted to National ANS Task Force for preliminary review in December 2008. Have not received any comments from the Task Force.
- Public comment period ended January 28, 2009.
- Most comments/concerns should be easily addressed.
- A few groups/organizations are concerned with one species in the Plan and submitted several recommendations.

Island Apple Snails

- Island apple snails were collected and verified from Langan Park, Mobile County, in June 2008.
- Other invasive species collected included: Tilapia spp., red swamp crayfish, Asiatic clam, coontail, and parrotfeather.

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- A plan of attack to control the apple snails was developed.

Invasive Species Collection

- Two black tiger prawns were collected in Mobile Bay in September and October, 2008.
- An 8 pound red tilapia phenotype was caught from a pond in Houston County.

South Carolina - Chris Page reported that they are dealing with 28% budget cuts at this time. They have cooperated with North Carolina on the Lake Walley project. They have reported one new infestation of hydrilla and continue to provide samples from areas with hydrilla.

North Carolina - Although North Carolina was not represented, Trish Murphey provided the following. The brochures are being well received. Several boxes have been distributed to different DENR offices and also to the private sector. Murphey is also making contacts with Rob Emens from Water Resources about the possibility of developing a plan.

Texas - Earl Chilton reported that they are being directed by the Sunset Commission to develop a white list for invasive species. There will be a separate list for aquatic/exotic plants. It will take approximately 1-2 years to develop this list. Procedures and risk analysis will be developed for each species on the list. They are currently working on a risk analysis for water spinach and will use it as a model for other species.

Leslie Hartman mentioned a case in Dallas with a specific oyster introduction from Thailand. She also reported that they continue to fight biofuel battles.

Lisa Gonzalez reported on the pocket field guide for the Galveston Bay estuary. They are working on a companion guide for invasive species. The Master Naturalist program is working well as a distribution point. The guide should be complete by the fall meeting and she will bring copies for the Panel.

Louisiana - Isis Longo provided the following update:

Work in progress:

- Louisiana Aquatic Nuisance Species Pathway Protocol being developed under contract with USGS.
- Creation of state priority list of water bodies in need of treatment and state aquatic vegetation control plan.
- New mechanical removal shows promise for salvinia.

Updates:

- Salvinia weevils overwinter successfully
- Apple snails thriving in southern Louisiana.
- Recent MARAD developments.

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- Shrimp virus/VHS info.
- Louisiana Aquatic Invasive Species Council.

Georgia - Keith Weaver reported that they have received informal comments back from the Task Force for the Georgia Plan. These comments are consuming 90% of his time. Weave also mentioned that a conservation officer found hundreds of pounds of corbicula passing through Georgia to New York.

Mississippi - Dennis Riecke provided the following report for Mississippi.

- Last meeting of the State AIS Task Force was November 2007.
- State Management Plan for AIS was last revised in June 2008.
- Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality employees are trying to complete inclusion of revisions to the State Management Plan for final review and submission to Governor Barbour.
- March 2009 - I proposed lists of species for the approved, restricted and prohibited species list for inclusion in the State Management Plan document:

Approved Species List - **no restrictions or permits** required for the possession, use, culture, sale, import, export or transport within the State of Mississippi, unless otherwise required by State or Federal laws or regulations.

1. All Native Species
2. The following Non-native Species:
Common Carp - *Cyprinus carpio*
Gold Fish - *Carassius auratus*
Triploid Grass Carp - *Ctenopharyngodon idella*

Restricted Species List - **permits are required** for the possession, use, culture, sale, import, export, or transport within the State of Mississippi (those currently being cultured within the state):

1. The following Non-native Aquatic Species:
Diploid Grass Carp - *Ctenopharyngodon idella*
Bighead Carp - *Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*
Silver Carp - *Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*
Black Carp - *Mylopharyngodon piceus*
Tilapia Species - all species of tilapia in the Genera - *Tilapia*, *Oreochromis*, and *Sarotherodon*
Australian Red Claw Crawfish - *Cherax quadricarinatus*

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Malaysian Prawn - *Macrobrachium rosenbergii*

2. Other Non-native Aquatic Species which meet all the following criteria:
 - a. A scientific risk assessment has been conducted for the species using an approved methodology;
 - b. The results of the approved scientific risk assessment have been submitted to the Mississippi Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force for evaluation;
 - c. The Mississippi Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force has determined that the non-native species is unlikely to be an invasive species (i.e. a species whose introduction does not cause or is unlikely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health).
 - d. The Mississippi Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force recommends that the non-native species be added by the MDWFP to the Restricted Species List.

Prohibited Species List - **It is illegal to possess, use, culture, sell, offer for sale, import, export, or transport within the State of Mississippi live individuals or specimens of the following species (except as otherwise allowed by Federal and State laws and regulations):**

1. All Non-native Aquatic Species **not listed** on the Approved Species List or the Restricted Species List.
2. All Non-native Aquatic Species **listed as Injurious Wildlife Species in the Federal Lacey Act** - U.S.C. § 42(a)(1).
3. All Non-native Aquatic Species **listed on the Federal Noxious Weed List** at 7 C.F.R. § 360.200.
4. All Non-native Aquatic Species **listed on the Mississippi Noxious Weed List** - Rule 41: Regulation of Noxious Weed Under Sections 69-25-1 through 69-25-47, Chapter 380, Laws of Mississippi 1974.

Discussion on Alternative Funding Sources for AIS Demonstration Projects

Chilton identified several funding sources for ANS projects through www.grants.gov. Many were available from the National Science Foundation. Ballard also indicated that USDA may be able to supply funds for ANS projects on private lands. He included a copy of the grant outline in the Panel meeting folder. Panel members agreed that this was a good idea to pursue these funding sources. Panel members also agreed to search for sources for ANS control and/or outreach projects and forward that information to Chilton. Progress will be reported on at the next meeting.

Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force Update

Ballard reported that all Panels had written letters to the ANS Task Force requesting them to fully fund state plans and to increase funding for all of the Panels. In response to these letters, the ANSTF

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announced that there will be a special session to discuss this issue at the next meeting to be held in May 2009. Pitman added that states can also lobby to ask FWS to increase funding to the Panels.

Vote to Move Chuck Jacoby to an At-Large Member

Paul Carangelo made a motion to approve Chuck Jacoby as an At-Large member of the GSARP. Marilyn O'Leary seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Work Group Updates to the Panel and Future Directions for All Work Groups

Early Detection/Rapid Response

- Discussion to restructure rapid response plan
- Leslie to work with this group
- Update taxonomic experts with current information
- Cooperation between states as an appendix to rapid response plan

Research and Development

- Discussion to identify funding sources and projects
- Guidelines for rapid assessments
- Initial survey document listing species of concern - plans were to update it - not clear what that information would be used for - take off list.

Education and Outreach

- Multi-agency funding
- Consistency with national plan - James to send copy to Chuck
- Rat lung worm - discussion to inform persons of risk

Pathways and Prevention

- Inventory of Species Prevention Plans - check with Pam
- Prohibited species list linked - Tom Jackson working on
- Shrimp virus issue/VHS issue
- Review pathways document
- HAACP process could be of use for pathways - link to website.

Information/Management

- Prohibited Species lists linked to website
- Database of researchers working on invasive species.

Eradication/Control/Restoration

- Group has never met.
- Management techniques document could be developed.
- Group could maintain a list of links to get information rather than developing a document.

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Schmitz reported that he, Perry, Riecke, O'Leary and Hartman have developed a draft safety and emergency protocols document. Plans are to have the document available for review by the full Panel at the next meeting. At that meeting they will also discuss distribution of the document.

Other Business

Bob Pitman alerted the Panel that the Brown Tree Snake Control Team will be expanding its partnership to include some funding with DOD due to the increase risks from Guam from military movements. He will send the draft cooperative agreement to Ballard for distribution to the full Panel.

Diane Altsman announced that the U.S. EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program is now accepting nominations for 2009 Gulf Guardian Awards. First, second, and third place awards are given in seven categories: Business, Civic/Non-Profit Organization, Partnerships, Youth/Education, Individual, Government, and Bi-National. All 21 winners in seven different categories receive an impressive marble and glass memento, press coverage on their project, and recognition by their peers. All winners receive a professional video about their project and/or effort that is presented on the evening of the Gulf Guardian Awards ceremony. Altsman encouraged the Panel to make nominations for invasive species work being done in the states.

Dennis Riecke reported that he has fulfilled his contractual obligations on the invasive species brochures. Any further printing of the revised brochures would require permission from Ray Rendall, Exotic Species Project Coordinator, Division of Fish & Wildlife, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (651) 259-5131 - jay.rendall@dnr.state.mn.us. Upon permission he would release the electronic copies. Riecke suggested that each state receiving the brochures report on their effectiveness at the next meeting.

Next Meeting

North Carolina was selected as the next meeting location. The first week of November 2009 was selected as the time frame.

Public Comment

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

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 11:25 am.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**FISHERIES INFORMATION NETWORK (FIN)
MINUTES
June 10, 2009
Savannah, Georgia**

Vice Chairman V. Swann called the meeting to order on June 10, 2009 at 8:30 a.m. The following members, staff, and others were present:

Members

Kevin Anson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Steven Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Ken Brennan, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort Lab, NC
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Richard Cody, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Chris Denson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDNER, San Juan, PR
Daniel Matos-Caraballo, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Christine Murrell, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Tom Sminkey, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD
Vicki Swann, TPWD, Austin, TX
Steve Turner, (proxy for G. Davenport), NOAA Fisheries, SEFSC, Miami, FL

Staff

Donna Bellais, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Alex Miller, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Rob Andrews, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD
Zulena Cortes, PRDNER, San Juan, PR
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
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 11 and 12, 2008 in St. Thomas, USVI were approved as presented.

Status of Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program

G. White of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) gave an overview of activities for the past year. White distributed copies of the Status of Available Data

in the ACCSP Data Warehouse. The ACCSP Data Warehouse includes historical commercial catch and effort data from as far back as 1950. Other data modules will include: permit and vessel registration, biological, bycatch and socio-economic data.

White reported that several partners implemented improvements to their data collection programs. Maine has mandatory trip level reporting, New York began entering trip level reports, Delaware began laying the foundation for state dealer reporting. The remaining partners maintained trip level dealer reporting programs with improvements in participant and permit tracking. **White** noted that recreational fisheries continue to be monitored by the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) and the ACCSP will be involved in the transition of MRFSS to the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP).

The following is a list of ACCSP partner projects: Implementation of Mandatory Dealer Reporting System for Maine Commercial Landings, Portside Bycatch Sampling and Commercial Catch Sampling of the Atlantic Herring, Conversion Factor Update Sampling in Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, Maintenance and Coordination of Fisheries-Dependent Data Feeds from Rhode Island, Trip Level Reporting for Lobster Harvesters in Massachusetts, Continuation and Expansion of the New York Fishery-Dependent Data Collection and Biological Sampling, New Jersey Implementation of Commercial Fisheries Data Collection, Electronic Vessel Trip Reporting, Electronic Dealer Reporting, and Biological Characterization, Continuation of Initiating State Dealer Reporting in Delaware, Information Technology Support for Maryland Data Collection, Conduct of MRFSS Random Digit Dialing, For-Hire Telephone Calls, and Dockside Sampling in North Carolina, Estuarine Bycatch Assessment in North Carolina Commercial Fisheries, Sampling for Hard Part/Aging from Commercial Fishery for Snapper/Grouper Complex in South Carolina, Conversion of American Lobster from Business Objects to Oracle Discoverer, Reducing Catch and Effort Variances for Recreational Fisheries from Maine to Georgia, and Increase Intercept Sampling Levels for the MRFSS, For-Hire Methodology of Charter Boat and Headboat Fishery on the Atlantic Coast.

White reported that in 2008 approximately \$2 million was awarded to thirteen projects, in addition to funds provided for the administration of the program.

FIN Data Management System (DMS) Issues

Review of list of personnel with access to confidential data - **D. Donaldson** distributed a list of personnel with access to the FIN Data Management System (DMS) and requested that members make corrections or additions and return them to D. Bellais. **S. Turner** provided a similar list for the SEFSC.

Status of the FIN DMS – **D. Bellais** reported on the status of the FIN DMS noting that Oracle Discoverer public access tracking continues to be a work in progress. State partners continue to update and enter metadata into the InPort system. **Bellais** gave an update on record counts in the FIN DMS for commercial landings. **Bellais** reported that the pilot survey using the recreational fishing licenses ended in December 2008 for the entire Gulf of Mexico. Since Louisiana license data was the most complete it was chosen to represent the Gulf region. Louisiana's recreational fishing license data continues to be loaded by wave. Also of note is that after vessel data is received from all state partners it will be loaded into the FIN system and will then be linked to the Coast Guard vessel data via hull identification number or Coast Guard registration number. **Bellais** then gave a re-cap on biological sampling data, marine recreational fishery catch estimates, marine recreational fishery effort estimates, and menhaden data.

Discussion and Review of Monitoring the Gulf of Mexico Commercial Reef Fish Document

C. Robbins of the Ocean Conservancy gave a presentation to the FIN Committee on the document entitled, *Monitoring the Gulf of Mexico Commercial Reef Fish Fishery*.

The Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council (GMFMC) requested that the FIN Committee review this document and provide feedback and comments to them prior to their next meeting. The following are comments and suggestions from the FIN Committee:

General Comments by FIN

- There needs to be adequate enforcement (with concrete consequences for not complying) for all of the proposed reporting requirements for these requirements to be successful. Without sufficient enforcement, the proposed rules and regulations will not provide improvement in the available data.
- FIN believed it was important to state that adequate funding needs to be available to ensure the success of the proposed requirements. While this may be stating the obvious, the group believed it was essential to document.
- Another key to success is sufficient outreach to the fishermen and dealers about the proposed rules and regulations. Without the support and input from industry, the proposed requirements are destined to fail.

Fishing Logbooks Recommendations (from Reef Fish document)

- *Require and include the recording of all fish caught at sea, including an estimate of the weight of fish caught and released by species by area and gear type, in fishing logbooks.*
- *Require and include the recording of lost gear, including the amount of gear (length of groundline and number of hooks) and location of disappearance, in fishing logbooks.*
- *Record fishing events on a daily basis (If possible, data should be collected for set location and soak time) in fishing logbooks.*
- *Complete all daily Fishing Logbook trip report forms by 12:00 p.m. (noon) of the day following a fishing day.*
- *Develop and implement an electronic standardized template as soon as practicable.*

FIN Comments - it is essential to have validation of the logbook data. This can be accomplished via at-sea sampling as well as utilizing evolving technologies (electronic monitoring with cameras, etc). Also, it was recognized that daily recording of the information was important and key; there may not be a need for daily reporting of these data at this point in time.

Dealer Reports Recommendations (from Reef Fish document)

- *Require dealers who receive Reef Fish to submit to the SEFSC complete and accurate Dealer Reports which include aggregated landed weights by species for all species landed.*
- *Require submission of Dealer Reports on a weekly basis and receipt of Dealer Reports by the SEFSC no later than 5 days following the week during which data were received.*
- *Expedite and expand a mandatory electronic Dealer Report system to all reef species managed under ACLs.*

FIN Comments - while having quicker reporting periods would assist in managing species under ACLs, it needs to be realized that changing the reporting period for the state trip ticket programs (dealer reporting) might be problematic and difficult to accomplish in a short timeframe.

Integrated Data Systems Recommendations (from Reef Fish document)

- *Require entry of Fishing Logbook, Dealer Report and VMS data into a single Fisheries Operating System (FOS) that allows for data merging, checking, and reporting.*

FIN Comments - the Committee believed this was a great concept and stressed the importance of involving all partners in this process. FIN should be integrally involved in the development of such as system.

Discussion of Registration Tracking Module regarding Vessel Information

Since the Registration Tracking Module has been very difficult to launch due to a variety of reasons, it was suggested hiring a contractor to compile this information from all the states. The FIN Committee discussed the possible costs involved and **D. Donaldson** will check on the costs for the various contracts to get an idea of the necessary funds. After some discussion, the states believed this was a good approach and asked that staff move forward with implementing this task.

National Recreational Fishermen Registry Issues

R. Andrews of NOAA Fisheries gave an update on the License Frame Pilot Survey noting that the Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Act was signed into law in January 2007. This Act requires the implementation of a federal angler registry and an improved data collection program. The Angler License Directory Survey (ALDS) was implemented in March 2007 and utilizes state databases of saltwater license holders as sampling frames. This survey is conducted independently from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS) and utilizes similar procedures as CHTS. **Andrews** discussed the benefits and limitations of the ALDS as well as explaining the dual-frame approach. The benefits of the ALDS includes improved efficiency of contacting fishing households, a wider geographic coverage of fishing households, and will allow for stratification of data based on residency or types of fishing license. Some of the limitations have been lower than expected data quality from the license databases, low response rates (15-30%) and under-coverage due to license exemptions in some states. Methods are being tested to help improve response rates such as improving sample frame quality, sending out pre-notification letters, retaining cell phone numbers in the sample frame, and using multiple vendors for telephone matching. The dual-frame approach, using the RDD and the ALDS is providing even higher coverage than the ALDS alone. The dual-frame approach also provides the benefit of improved efficiency and the ability to stratify the results but is limited by the complexity and cost of running the survey and possible increases in measurement error. **Andrews** provided some preliminary results for shore and private boat mode in Louisiana for wave 2 2008 through wave 1 2009. Effort estimates for the coastal household telephone survey (CHTS), ALDS, and dual-frame approach were not significantly different but in most cases dual-frame estimates were similar or lower than the CHTS estimates. The dual frame study will continue through 2009 but

will be limited to Louisiana in the Gulf of Mexico because they have the most complete angler license database.

Economic Data Program

Miller of GSMFC gave an update on the activities of the FIN Economic Data Program by first listing the components which include economic data collection, economic analysis and research, and economic outreach. Current projects are an economic survey of the inshore shrimp fleet, economic survey of fishing-related business, marine angler expenditure survey and marine recreational use survey. **Miller** also noted that economic research is being conducted to determine the influence of fuel prices on marine recreational angler effort and a two day economic workshop was conducted in March 2009 with 22 fisheries economists attending. Discussion was held concerning the participation of the states within the fishing-related businesses project. After discussion it was determined that the states are currently unavailable to collect data for this project. **Miller** noted that data collection activities throughout the Gulf for this project will therefore likely enter into a competitive request for proposals (RFP).

The early development of a Gulf fisheries economics portal was also presented by **Miller**. He explained that the portal will allow individuals to log on to the web in order to access fisheries economic literature and data/impacts for the Gulf.

Update on Electronic Trip Ticket/IFQ Compatibility Issues

D. Donaldson reported that the issue of electronic trip ticket/IFQ compatibility is being worked out between **Claude Peterson** of Bluefin Data and programmers from NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office (SERO). The final product will allow dealers to report all fish through the current electronic trip ticket process except for red snapper. Dealers will be provided a link for entering their red snapper data through the existing federal IFQ web system. After entering their red snapper on the IFQ system the red snapper data will automatically be transferred back to the state trip ticket to fulfill the state data requirements. **C. Denson** asked if this system has been implemented currently in the Gulf of Mexico. **Donaldson** stated that he was not sure if the final product was completed and in use by dealers. **M. Kasprzak** asked if **Peterson** could attend the upcoming GSMFC meeting in October to demonstrate the software at the Data Management Subcommittee meeting. **Donaldson** said that he would talk to **Peterson** and arrange for a demonstration.

Status of Marine Recreational Information Program

R. Andrews gave a presentation that updated the group on the ongoing projects for MRIP. NOAA recently announced funding support for 12 new projects. The latest work will build upon existing work and expanding on existing initiatives. The Design and Analysis workgroup is working to develop an estimation program that integrates telephone fishing effort surveys in a dual-frame approach, developing a sample design for a dual-frame mail survey that will be tested as an alternative to telephone surveys for fishing effort, and developing a methodology to test for differences in catch rate, angler characteristics, and behavior between trips sampled by field interviewers and trips that are not sampled due to factors like property restrictions or remoteness of locations. The for-hire workgroup received funding to design pilot studies to test the feasibility of a regional logbook reporting program for the for-hire fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. The Angler Registry Database Workgroup continues to work with states on

data transmission issues. Implementation of state angler license data is ongoing as Memoranda of Agreements with states are being established. The Highly Migratory Species Workgroup completed data collection for their pilot survey in Southeast Florida. A final report will be generated in the summer of 2009 to help develop future surveys for the HMS fishery that provide more precise and accurate data.

Review and Approval of 2008 Annual Report

FIN Committee members were provided with copies of the draft 2008 FIN Annual Report. It was noted that result oriented tables have been added to the Annual Report for 2008. **G. Bray** requested that members of the Committee review the Annual Report and provide comments, revisions, or corrections to staff by June 29, 2009. **M. Kasprzak moved to accept the FIN 2008 Annual Report with pending changes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Subcommittee and Work Group Reports

FIN members were provided with copies of all Subcommittee and Work Group Reports. The Reports are part of these minutes and are attached.

Administrative Subcommittee – (Attachment A)

The Administrative Subcommittee met via conference call in April 2009. This group was tasked with reviewing the goals and objectives of the FIN program as they relate to the external program review. Since external reviews in the past have been of limited value, the FIN Committee agreed to discontinue this practice and conduct an internal review. The Subcommittee also discussed adding result-oriented tables for the Annual Report and these tables will be incorporated. A meeting summary/report for the call is attached. The FIN Committee reviewed this summary and **M. Kasprzak moved to accept the report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee – (Attachment B)

The Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee/TCC Data Management Subcommittee (DMS) met in October of 2008 and March 2009.

At the October 2008 meeting biological sampling activities were discussed including, otolith and lengths collected, otolith analysis from 2002 to 2007, the status of web-based data entry program, and a discussion on duplicate records in FIN and TIP databases. Since it has been difficult to collect information for commercial fishermen, dealers and vessels, **D. Donaldson** suggested that FIN identify this as high priority in 2009 and hire a contractor in 2010 to collect these data. Discussions were also held on trip ticket requirements for E- reporting, MRIP, economic data collection, and trip tickets for the for-hire fishery.

At the March 2009 meeting a group of interested parties was brought together in an attempt to coordinate efforts to revise data collection methods for the recreational for-hire fishery. B. Zales, M. Kasprzak, P. Pate, J. Barger and H. Henniger gave presentations on various data collection programs.

Minutes of these meetings are attached. **K. Cuevas moved to accept these reports. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Commercial Port Sampler Meetings – (Attachment C)

The Gulf Port Samplers met in September 2008 in New Orleans, Louisiana. The following issues were discussed: golden tilefish sampling, TIP issues, hurricane relief efforts for the fishing industry, law enforcement in the Gulf of Mexico, and data confidentiality. **P. Fuller** of USGS gave presentation on non-native species. The following morning, the port samplers took a field trip to crab processors in the New Orleans area.

The Caribbean Port Samplers also met in September 2008 in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. **D. Matos** gave a presentation on Puerto Rico's commercial fisheries statistics program, and personnel from the USVI gave presentations on commercial catch records, trip interview program, and biostatistical summaries. Later port samplers took a field trip to various fishing locations and markets in Rincon and Aquadilla.

Meeting summaries are attached. **P. Campbell moved to accept the Commercial Port Sampler reports. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Otolith Processors Training Workshop – (Attachment D)

The Otolith Processors Training Workshop was held in May of 2009 in St. Petersburg, Florida. Otolith reading exercises were conducted for black drum, red drum, spotted seatrout, gray triggerfish, king mackerel, flounders, sheepshead, striped mullet, gray snapper, red snapper, and vermilion snapper. The following day there were discussions of reference sets for the above species, the revision of the otolith manual, and greater amberjack ageing techniques. D. Parkyn of the University of Florida will conduct a training session for greater amberjack next May.

The meeting summary of the otolith processors training workshop is attached. **M. Kasprzak moved to accept this report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Data Collection Work Group – (Attachment E)

The Data Collection Work Group met via conference call in April of 2009. This work group was tasked with determining if the commercial data collection methods in the Gulf of Mexico are collecting bait and marine life landings. After discussion the work group determined that live market activities are sufficiently covered through the commercial trip ticket program in the Gulf of Mexico.

A summary of the conference call is attached. **M. Kasprzak moved to accept this report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Data Collection Plan Work Group – (Attachment F)

The Data Collection Plan Work Group met via conference call in April of 2009. The purpose of this meeting was to review otolith collection reports for 2008. Several items were recommended by the work group:

- ask D. Murie of the University of Florida to help determine if there are differences in the age structure of the harvest,
- ask D. Murie what percentage of collected greater amberjack otoliths were readable to determine if collection efforts are worthwhile, and
- FIN continue to use current targets for biological sampling in 2010.

A summary of the conference call is attached. **P. Campbell moved to accept this report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Operations Plan

Status of 2009 Activities

The FIN Committee was provided with a list of activities currently being conducted. The Committee reviewed the various activities and noted that all activities were either completed or being addressed as outlined in the Operations Plan.

Review and Approval of 2010 Operations Plan

The FIN Committee reviewed the 2010 Operations Plan. It was noted the activities in the plan were developed from committee, subcommittee and work group activities. The FIN Committee needs to ensure that all proposed activities are necessary and will move the program forward. The State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S/FFMC) will meet in August 2009 to give final approval to the Plan. FIN Committee members were asked to forward any comments or corrections to staff by June 29, 2009. **C. Lilyestrom moved to give tentative approval to the 2010 Operations Plan. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

Discussion of 2010 FIN Priorities

Committee members were provided with a list of items for funding consideration in 2010. **G. Bray** reported that the list was generated from activities conducted last year as well as discussions in various subcommittee and work group meetings. The final prioritized list will be forwarded to the S/FFMC for their meeting in August 2009. At that time they will decide which items will be included in the 2010 FIN cooperative agreement. All items listed as high priority will require budgets and statements of work by July 13, 2009. **The Committee agreed to list as high priority all ongoing activities.** The prioritized list of activities for 2010 is as follows:

High Priority

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities (ongoing)
Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data (ongoing)
Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida (ongoing)
Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling (ongoing)
Operation of FIN Data Management System (ongoing)
Full Implementation of Trip Ticket Program 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)
At-sea Sampling (catch) for Head Boats in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida (new/ongoing)
Collection of Detailed Effort for Blue Crab Fishery in Louisiana with electronic monitoring component (ongoing/new)

Low Priority

Biological Sampling for Additional Species (new)

Time Schedule and Location for Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to schedule the next FIN meeting for the 2nd week in June of 2010. Possible locations for the meeting are Austin, San Antonio, New Orleans, or Orlando.

Planning for future activities – The timeline outlines the activities of FIN until 2010. Therefore, the Committee needs to consider conducting another facilitated session to map out activities for 2011-2015. The group agreed that it was time for another session and staff should plan on holding such a meeting. Since a facilitated session is planned for the FIN 2010 meeting, the Committee agreed that 1 ½ days would be necessary.

Election of Officers

K. Cuevas of Mississippi Department of Marine Resources was elected Chairman and T. Sminkey of NOAA Fisheries was elected Vice Chairman.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

**FIN Administrative Subcommittee
Conference Call Summary
April 27, 2009**

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

Members

Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Ken Brennan, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC
Nancie Cummings (proxy for G. Davenport), NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Tom Sminkey, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD

Staff

Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Review FIN Goals and Objectives

D. Donaldson stated that at the last FIN Committee meeting, the Committee tasked this group with reviewing the goals and objectives as they relate to the external program review. It was noted that several of the past external reviews of been of limited value to the FIN program. The FIN Committee agreed to discontinue the practice of conducting external reviews of the program every five years. Therefore, this group needs to modify the goals and objectives to reflect this change in the program. It was pointed out that this task refers to Goal 1, Objective 5: To conduct a program review at least every five years of operation to evaluate the program's success in meeting needs in the Region. While an external review is not very useful, it was suggested that the FIN Committee still needs to periodically examine the program's effectiveness and can be accomplished via an internal review. **D. Donaldson** suggested simply added "internal" to Objective 5 to express this idea. The revised goals and objectives are attached. **K. Anson** noted that there needs to be some type of tracking process to ensure that the data needs and information exchange is documented between the reviews. This will enable FIN to better evaluate its effectiveness in meetings its goals. **The FIN Committee needs to address this issue and charge the appropriate subcommittee/work group with developing the process.**

Develop Results-Oriented Tables for the FIN Annual Report

D. Donaldson noted it was suggested at the last FIN meeting that some results-oriented tables be included in the FIN Annual Report to present the work in a more quantifiable manner. Some draft tables were developed as a starting point and the group reviewed these tables. The tables presented results from the recreational data collection activities, FIN data management system, electronic reporting option for the trip ticket programs and biological sampling. It was noted that these tables would be incorporated into the FIN Annual Report and there would be some description of the tables within the text of that report. After some discussion, the group decided to add tables regarding the number of interviews and biological data collected during the head boat survey as well as some results from the menhaden port sampling. Pertaining to the head boat information, **K. Brennan** would provide the requested information to staff by mid-

May. Regarding the menhaden activities, **D. Donaldson** stated he would contact Joe Smith for the appropriate type of information to include in the report. Please note that the actual tables were incorporated into the 2008 FIN Annual Report and represent the administrative record for this portion of the call.

There being no further business, the call was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

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 protocol 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.

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

MINUTES

Monday, October 12, 2008

Key Largo, FL

Vice-chairman Vicki Swann called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

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

Staff

David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry B. Simpson, GSMFC Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Donna Bellais, ComFIN Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS
Alex Miller, GSMFC Staff Economist, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, FIN Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Steve Turner, NMFS, Miami, FL
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
Beverly Sauls, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Mike Brainard, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Peter Murphy, NOAA, Seattle, WA
Terry Cody, Rockport, TX
Steve Heath, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Jeff Barger, EDF, Austin, TX
David McKinney, EDF, Austin, TX
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on March 10, 2008 in Galveston, TX were approved as written.

Status of Biological Sampling Activities

Review of targets and collection activities – **G. Bray** discussed the handouts that summarized the otolith and lengths collected for the thirteen Fisheries Information Network (FIN) target species for 2008. All states are doing a good job of collecting otoliths and working toward their species specific targets. The Data Management Subcommittee will review the final 2008 collection numbers at the March 2009 meeting.

Review of analysis activities – Subcommittee members were provided with a matrix detailing otolith analysis from 2002 to 2007 listing the five Gulf States. **G. Bray** mentioned the states are getting age data in on a timely basis. Florida is working to get age data for additional FIN target species in addition to red snapper for 2005 and 2006. R. Cody mentioned they have age data for king mackerel for 2006 and 2007 and should also be able to catch up on most of the inshore species aged by FWC staff. Those data should be in the data management system in the near future.

Status of web-based data entry program – **D. Bellais** reported that the web-based program has been available for online testing for a few months. Alabama has tested the program and is concerned with speed problems. Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) thinks that new hardware currently being installed will improve the program's speed problems. Louisiana has lost several people from their age and growth lab so they have not been able to do a thorough program review. Louisiana may continue with the old standard of data entry and delivery until they have an opportunity to test the online program.

Discussion of inclusion of state targets in tracking documents – **G. Bray** noted that Louisiana has a few state otolith targets that are collected using state funding sources. **M. Kasprzak** reported that Louisiana is delivering these data to GSMFC and should continue to report those numbers but GSMFC needs to adjust the overall target for those species.

Discussion of duplicate records in FIN and TIP databases – **G Bray** questioned why some states are entering commercial samples as duplicates into the FIN biological sampling database. All the states agreed that this is not necessary and only FIN commercial samples should be entered into the FIN database. Duplicate recreational lengths that were collected as part of a Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) sample will still be accepted into the FIN biological sampling database.

Discussion of Commercial Fishermen, Dealer and Vessel Information

D. Bellais reported that these data are still important and each state needs to continue to improve the quality of the fisherman, dealer, and vessel information provided to GSMFC.

Similar problems in previous years occurred in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Alabama is hoping that new leadership might allow for an opportunity to overcome current obstacles. Louisiana is still understaffed and does not have the manpower to make the necessary programming fixes. Florida is still having problems with confidentiality issues. **D. Donaldson suggested that FIN identify this issue as a high priority in 2009 and hire a contractor to collect these data from each state in 2010.** Having the necessary funding will possibly be an issue but this seems like the best possible approach given the current state obstacles.

Discussion of Trip Ticket Requirements to Facilitate E-reporting

Steve Turner reported that his job is to monitor landings of multiple species including groupers, mackerels, greater amberjack, grey triggerfish, sharks, and swordfish. The Magnuson-Stevens Act states that by 2010 NOAA Fisheries will need to be monitoring landings of all overfished species and all species by 2011 (probably a large subset of the total species complex). Annual catch limits for each species will be set up by each regional council. Accountability measures will be set up in case fisheries are not managed correctly from year to year. The need for timely monitoring of fisheries landings will be essential. Currently NOAA Fisheries are using a bi-weekly reporting system for coastal sharks collected commercially. Dealers are required to deliver landings to NOAA Fisheries within 10 days after the specified reporting period. These data are aggregated off the current trip ticket forms that the states require. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) has been working with GSMFC and the states to receive data instantly from dealers reporting with the electronic interface developed by Claude Peterson. This will soon eliminate the need for aggregated duplicative reporting for the dealers using the e-report system. The trip ticket e-reports will provide more and better quality data to the SEFSC. SEFSC is very interested in ways to move towards increased e-reporting from commercial dealers. It will likely require some outreach or mandates to decrease lag times because some dealers may only transmit e-reports once per month. Turner suggested that some additional quality control during data submission might be a good way to increase the quality of e-reported data. **For 2010 SEFSC is considering making e-reporting mandatory for dealers required to report certain species.** They currently require reporting for dealers that account for the top 95% of the landings for species they are required to monitor. This amounts to approximately 75-125 dealers. **M. Kasprzak** asked if SEFSC compared their list of required dealers with the list of dealers that are currently reporting electronically. **Turner** stated that many grouper dealers are likely reporting electronically but they are not clear how many mackerel and shark dealers are currently reporting electronically. **Turner** suggested that offering the dealers one single electronic reporting option could help reduce a paper burden for the states. SEFSC has looked into some software used by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) and has shared that with GSMFC for consideration. **Peterson** looked at this software and said he could tailor software similar to that but he still preferred his system for future development. In August SEFSC met with GSMFC, Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), and R. Cody of Florida as well as many of the South Atlantic states to update everyone on electronic reporting needs in use with quota monitoring. Agreement was reached on how to move forward with the electronic reporting system. SEFSC hopes that data will transmit directly to GSMFC and allow the states to update and clean records directly with GSMFC. SEFSC would then perform their quota monitoring directly using the data at GSMFC and not have to manage a database at their end. **Kasprzak** asked how often SEFSC would be requesting

dealer reports. **Turner** mentioned that weekly reports would likely be the necessary option. **S. Turner** asked how the states thought the reception would be if mandatory reporting for all dealers was implemented. Most states said small dealers still face some technological problems that might prevent electronic reporting. **Donaldson** mentioned FIN is getting ready to send outreach material to paper ticket dealers detailing the benefits of electronic reporting.

Presentation of National Recreational Fishermen Registry

G. Colvin reported on the new implementation plan for the Marine Recreational Information Plan (MRIP). The program goal is to build a new national recreational data collection program tailored to regional needs. MRIP hopes to enhance accountability, timeliness, and decision-making ability. MRIP is evaluating current estimation methods, conducting outreach to key stakeholders, and developing the final rule for the National Saltwater Angler Registry (NSAR). A few pilot projects are beginning to evaluate survey process and estimation techniques. In the future MRIP will begin a phased implementation of new survey methods and also benchmark new methods for possible adjustment of historical data. Several comments were received from states and fishery management councils. States asked if NOAA Fisheries could complete the final rule but delay implementation of the federal registry for one year. This would allow states to work with their legislatures to either institute a saltwater license or broaden their current license to meet federal registry guidelines. Many public comments address opposition to fees and fees going to federal treasury instead of conservation, placing the burden on commercial fishing, using different methods to gather data outside of a fisherman registry, and thoughts that reporting should be voluntary. The NSAR is set to begin in January 2009. **Colvin** mentioned many of the states that did not previously have a saltwater fishing license have been working with state government to institute a license program to help exempt them from the NSAR. **S. Atran** asked if registered anglers will receive a registration card and also asked if penalties will be imposed if an angler fails to register. **Colvin** mentioned that all anglers will receive a registration card with an ID number and also mentioned a penalty schedule needs to be proposed that would be appropriate for not registering.

Discussion of State Participation in Economics Data Collection Activities

A. Miller updated the group on a meeting held with the socio/economic workgroup in September 2008. The Marine Angler Expenditure Survey will likely not be implemented until 2010 at the earliest. The survey of fishing related businesses will hopefully be implemented in late 2009. Currently the group is working with the state of Louisiana on the sampling frame and methodology for the Gulf of Mexico inshore shrimp survey. GSMFC is hoping that Louisiana will refine the sampling frame and methodology and will move forward with implementation in other states that are willing to participate. **Donaldson** asked if anyone had a problem with Louisiana taking the lead in data collection. There was no objection to this approach. **Miller** asked if other states would be interested in collecting inshore shrimp economic data. **R. Cody** mentioned that working with Steve Brown initially would be best before bringing the FWC economist into the process. **K. Anson** mentioned that it should not be too difficult for Alabama to produce the initial sampling frame. Mississippi also agreed to participate with the implementation process. **Donaldson** asked if additional funds would be necessary for compiling sampling frames and most states said it would not be necessary. **Miller** mentioned that the inshore shrimp survey would likely be a mail survey. **Kasprzak** asked if the issue has been

resolved on whether it was a vessel or fisherman based survey. **Miller** said the issue has not been resolved and we need to get input from each state to resolve that issue before moving forward. **Miller** hopes to have a draft of the initial survey to distribute in the next few weeks.

Discussion of Feasibility of Using Trip Ticket Systems for the For-Hire Fishery

D. Donaldson mentioned this issue came up from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council meeting in August. The original motion has been expanded to include e-log books, web-based reporting, video monitoring, and/or catch cards. **Kasprzak** mentioned Louisiana is currently working with Claude Peterson to develop an electronic reporting system for offshore for-hire fishing vessels similar to what **Peterson** has created for an MRIP pilot program in Puerto Rico. The Louisiana program will only be voluntary. Louisiana hopes to match up the voluntary electronic reported data with the current dockside intercept data to analyze for similarities and differences. **S. Atran** mentioned this motion came out of the Ad Hoc Recreational Red Snapper AP so the motion was really focused on improving red snapper management. Some of the recommendations could apply to advances being made through the MRIP process. **Donaldson** mentioned that it has not been determined if the states have the authority to mandate data collection for the for-hire fishery. Currently there are no state regulations in the Gulf of Mexico for mandatory reporting in the recreational fishery. **R. Cody** thinks it would be very difficult to get the necessary legislation approved in Florida to require mandatory reporting. **K. Cuevas** asked if the federal government could handle the burden of regulating and enforcing mandatory reporting for vessels permitted and fishing in the EEZ. **R. Cody** mentioned that waiting to hear what MRIP recommends for sampling the for-hire fishery would be a good course of action. **Donaldson** mentioned that this is the first step in this process. NOAA Fisheries, the Gulf States, and Commission staff will continue to work on this issue.

Status of Metadata Data Entry

D. Donaldson asked the states to give an update on the metadata entry progress. Florida has moved their metadata to a new system that is compatible with InPort. **R. Cody** will be trained in the near future on how to use their new system. **K. Anson** mentioned metadata entry is still a priority for Alabama but a low priority. Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas have entered some information but it still needs to be reviewed and published. **Donaldson** reminded everyone about the importance of these data and getting them into InPort in a timely manner. **Donaldson** asked that all states have published data in InPort by March 2009.

Commercial QA/QC Data Review

After some Subcommittee discussion this review was postponed and will probably be rescheduled as a short afternoon session on Mondays during each October meeting.

Election of Chairman

Richard Cody was elected as chairman. Kerwin Cuevas was elected as vice chairman.

Other Business

D. Donaldson mentioned that FIN has been asked to get more involved in helping provide data for the publication *Fisheries of the United States*. The states need to attempt to get end of year data into the FIN DMS as soon as possible.

G. Davenport mentioned they need previous year's data by April 1st of the following year. Donaldson asked the group to keep this in mind as they are processing data towards the end of each year.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

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

MINUTES

Monday, March 16, 2009

New Orleans, LA

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

Members

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

Staff

David Donaldson, FIN Data Program Manager, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry B. Simpson, GSMFC Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Donna Bellais, ComFIN Survey Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, FIN Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, GSMFC, IT Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Beverly Sauls, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Bob Zales II, PCBA – CCGF, Panama City, FL
Roy Crabtree, NOAA Fisheries/Southeast Regional Office, St. Petersburg, FL
Heidi Henniger, Olfish-Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association, Bedford, NH
Jeff Barger, Environmental Defense Fund, Austin, TX
Rob Andrews, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD
Preston Pate, NOAA Fisheries/MRIP
Tommy Williams, Daybrook Fisheries, Baton Rouge, LA
Claude Peterson, Bluefin Data LLC, Prairieville, LA
David McKinney, Environmental Defense Fund, Austin, TX
Bonnie Ponwith, NOAA Fisheries/Southeast Fishery Science Center, Miami, FL
Pam Anderson, Capt. Anderson Marina/CCGF/GOMARS
Ken Anderson, Capt. Anderson Marina/CCGF/GOMARS
Logan Respass, TX Sea Grant College Program, College Station, TX
Gary Jarvis, Charter Boat Back Down 2, Destin, FL
Pamela Jarvis, Charter Boat Back Down 2, Destin, FL
Tracy Redding, AAA Charters, Foley, AL
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX

Robin Riechers, TPWD, Austin, TX
Suzy Delaune, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Robert Boothe Jr, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Schuyler Dartez, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Myron Fischer, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Bill Blome, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
Bonnie Spinazzola, Olfish-Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association, Bedford, NH
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries/Southeast Regional Office, St. Petersburg, FL
Ed Sapp, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Bobbi Walker, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Mike Rowell, Orange Beach Charter Boat Assoc., Fairhope, AL
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mike Nugent, Port Aransas Boatmen Assoc., Port Aransas, TX
Terry Cody, Rockport, TX
Chad Hanson, Pew Environmental Group, Crawfordville, FL
Michael Harden, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Blake LeBlanc, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Mark Griffith, Mobile Scheduling Solutions, Havarre, FL
Tom Becker, MS Charter Boat Captains Assoc., Biloxi, MS
Thomas Putnam, Half Hitch Tackle

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on October 13, 2008 in Key Largo, FL were approved as written.

Discussion of For-hire Data Collection Methods

R. Crabtree mentioned that recreational data collection methods in the Gulf of Mexico for-hire industry have become an important topic. This meeting was proposed to bring all interested parties together to attempt to coordinate efforts to revise data collection methods for the recreational for-hire fishery. We all agree that there is room for improvement based on current data collection methodologies. He stressed that if we can all work together and also try to work together with the MRIP program the final product should result in better for-hire data collection methods in the Gulf of Mexico.

Project Presentations

GOMARS Project – **B. Zales** is presenting based on a coalition of for-hire captains, private recreational anglers and industry professionals. **Zales** stated that their proposed data collection effort would provide better data at lower cost under a real time reporting scenario. They propose to collect data using a variety of methods including cell phones, internet, smart phones, and logbooks via vessel monitoring systems. GOMARS proposes using cell phones and satellite phones for departure/arrival reports with web based weekly log book reporting. **Zales** stated this should be easy to implement because cell phones are widely used and available. The flexibility

of available reporting methods with this data collection method should improve compliance among industry participants. **Zales** suggested that this methodology should be tested for the red snapper fishery during the 2009 fishing season but he also stated this methodology could easily be expanded to other species. The electronic logbook portion would collect number of anglers fishing, time spent fishing, number of red snapper caught, thrown back, and harvested. Captains would enter a departure time, expected arrival time, their arrival location, and would receive a departure confirmation code. Upon arriving back at the dock, the captains would enter their confirmation code, confirm their arrival time, and enter the number of red snapper anglers and total red snapper landings for the boat. They would then receive an arrival confirmation code confirming they entered the required data. They would be required to enter the number of red snapper landed and discarded in federal and state waters. The system is setup to allow captains to enter and save vessel information regarding primary ports and/or marina locations, contact telephone numbers, and email address. **Zales** suggested that a modified dockside intercept survey could be used to validate landings by coordinating sampler site selection with GOMARS arrival confirmations. **Zales** proposed a weekly log book reporting scenario and suggested the continued use of MRFSS and for-hire survey data for additional validation and comparison. Results should provide numbers of anglers fishing for red snapper, time fished, number caught, number discarded and the impact on state versus federal waters. **Zales** proposed having 3-5 regional workshops in the Gulf of Mexico region to explain and educate industry participants. To establish this new reporting system the GOMARS program would request that federal charter and head boat reef fish permit holders would be mandated to participate in order to renew their permits each year. Full implementation would require the Gulf coast states to require all non-federal for-hire reef permit holders to participate in GOMARS. **C. Perret** asked how quickly their proposed system would be able to provide usable fishery management data. **Zales** said the data would still need to be reviewed by NOAA Fisheries but the current time schedules could be improved to produce usable results much quicker. **K. Cuevas** asked what the budget for this proposed survey would be and if the costs would be more than the current sampling methodologies. **Zales** said the maximum cost would be \$100,000 per year but it might be less. **L. Simpson** asked what the difference between anglers attempting to catch red snapper and those that actually catch red snapper. **Zales** mentioned they are hoping to quantify these categories instead of just using permitted number of anglers as the total number of anglers impacting the red snapper fishery.

Louisiana For-hire Trip Ticket Project – **M. Kasprzak** stated that the 2008 Louisiana legislation passed act 564 which is a voluntary for-hire reporting system to collect number of trips, number of anglers, area fished, time fished, trip origin, and any information determined by the Louisiana commission to be necessary to properly manage the fishery resources of the state, and any information required by the commission to prepare stock assessments. The reporting system was originally introduced as a mandatory reporting system but came out of committee as a voluntary system. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) will be asking for captains name and licenses held, vessel name and registration numbers, number of anglers, trip dates and times, actual fishing time, primary area fished, average depth fished, reef planning areas, access type, fishing methods, and optional information on species caught, quantity caught, target species, and dispositions. The data provided by the licensee will be kept confidential. **Kasprzak** mentioned many of the captains are very concerned about confidentiality issues. Louisiana has

contracted with Claude Petersen who manages the commercial trip ticket programs for all the Gulf States. This program is a pc based system that resides on each participant's computer. Data are transmitted to a secure server and then onto LDWF. Captains are required to report monthly but can do so more often. The program allows for many default variables (access type, method, etc) to allow for more streamlined data entry. LDWF will continue the FHS to help validate the voluntary log book program. LDWF is concerned about non-reporting bias because of the voluntary nature of the program. This will also limit the ability to use these data for stock assessment purposes. LDWF has a very large inshore guide fishery and are currently skeptical about the amount of compliance they will get from this sector of their fishery. They have arranged to beta test the program with seven captains. After testing is complete they will do some outreach to try to obtain more participation from the entire for-hire fishery in Louisiana. **S. Atran** asked if Louisiana law has the flexibility to change this system to a mandatory program with Gulf wide implementation if we adopted some form of a mandatory program. **Kasprzak** believes their state law is flexible enough to work with that. **Zales** asked if LDWF has talked with the offshore licensed captains to determine their level of participation. **Kasprzak** mentioned the offshore fleet seems willing to participate but the inshore guides have expressed some concerns about the burden of reporting. **B. Sauls** asked if the catch portion of the reporting system was optional. **Kasprzak** said the bill was structured that way but most captains have stated they are willing to provide the catch information. **R. Cody** asked how LDWF plans to evaluate the program after two years. **Kasprzak** mentioned they hope to evaluate the quality of the data produced, burden to LDWF staff, response rates, and estimate comparison with existing data collection methods.

MRIP For-hire Pilot Projects – **P. Pate** mentioned Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) was developed as a strategy to respond to the National Research Council (NRC) recommendations for improving recreational data collections. MRIP develops new projects through sharing information with all managing partners and stakeholders. The for-hire workgroup under MRIP has been asked by the operations team to generate a proposal for a log book pilot project in the for-hire fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. **Sauls** is the coordinator for the for-hire workgroup under MRIP. **B. Sauls** mentioned the NRC review recommended mandatory reporting tied to an annual permit renewal process. They recommended strict verification and enforcement components. Data should also be made available in a timely manner. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) recognized log books alone might not be enough. The for-hire workgroup contracted three consultants in 2008 to review current for-hire data collection programs. The consulting group recommended the universal use of logbooks and included a best practice recommendation list. The reporting system should be at the trip level and should be reported weekly. The consultants favored internet or web based reporting with a back up of telephone and fax. Procedures need to be established to identify missing reports is essential. The new system must maintain a complete for-hire vessel database to identify non-respondents, contacting them via telephone calls. The new system should utilize probability based sampling if non-respondent pool is large. Initial estimates should be based on raw logbook data but also must be adjusted based on validation which would include intercept and at-sea observations. Statistical methods to impute data for missing records would improve the new system. **Sauls** said the group recognized mandatory reporting would be beneficial but probably not attainable. They also provided guidance on adjusting the intercept procedures for validation

purposes. Changing fishing pressures, probability based sampling of sites, and defined time periods for samplers were a few of the consultant's suggestions and MRIP is currently working on these reviewing these methodological changes. Currently for-hire vessels with moratorium permits are required to participate in either the southeast head boat survey, the MRFSS for-hire survey, or the Texas Parks and Wildlife Survey. Each survey is unique to a small geographic region of portion of the Gulf of Mexico fishery. Currently vessels that do not hold federal permits only participate in these surveys voluntarily. The southeast head boat survey is a mandatory reporting system, but data are submitted monthly. There is also a small amount of non-compliance so the need for imputing missing data is necessary. MRIP proposals for 2009/2010 will hope to design imputation methods that could apply to other logbook programs, improve timeliness of data submission, develop probability based sample design for dockside catch and validation, and evaluate methods to integrate a head boat observer program for discards. The MRFSS for-hire survey was originally designed as a voluntary survey. The Gulf of Mexico has a refusal rate less than 10% for non-permitted vessels but a 20% non-contact rate which is currently unenforceable. The portion of non-contacts is significant and the amount of non-response bias is currently unknown. A proposal submitted to MRIP in 2009 is designed so Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, NOAA Fisheries, and industry representatives will work together to design a pilot logbook reporting system for the Gulf of Mexico. MRIP hopes to identify minimum data elements in cooperation with state agency staff and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fishery Science Center, need to determine necessary reporting frequency (real time, daily, weekly), evaluate practicality of reporting methods (with industry input), determine state level participation (willingness by states to migrate to a mandatory reporting system), evaluate cost and benefits of various reporting options, identify existing data sources for potential validation of self-reported data, identify methods for tracking non-response/non-compliance, and develop recommendations and preferred alternatives for proposed logbook reporting system. MRIP then wants to develop statistically sound methods for estimation working with statisticians with expertise in survey design and analysis. The last step would provide a proposal to MRIP in 2010 for funding to begin outreach to industry and begin testing in the Gulf of Mexico. This would provide recommendations for implementation and what the expected benchmark period would be. **M. Rowell** asked how soon MRIP would be able to collect data. **Pate** mentioned the MRIP strategy is deliberate and scientific based. **R. Andrews** also mentioned MRIP is speeding up the process for identifying project plans so hopefully this will allow for a pilot logbook project to start in late 2009.

SOS Electronic Logbook Project – **J. Barger** reported Save Ourselves (SOS) is an industry led initiative hoping to improve management in the for-hire fishery. The primary motivator is the pending regulations of annual catch limits and accountability measures. The major component of the SOS plan is an integrated logbook system. SOS goals are to develop a functioning electronic log book, integrate it with vessel monitoring systems (VMS), to demonstrate viability of real-time data collection, and broaden the discussion of alternatives for data collection in the for-hire sector. Project phases have included background research, data modeling, software development, beta testing (end of April 2009 on 10-15 vessels), a pilot study (extended through red snapper season and maybe through all of 2009), and a final report with recommendations. Data will be transmitted immediately after each trip, VMS data will be transmitted to GSMFC, NOAA Fisheries and a third party university to help verify data were transmitted. The SOS

current proposal is more cost effective and efficient for validation and enforcement. **H. Henniger** with Olfish presented the software they are developing for the SOS project. The software program can work on all levels of computers and they are working on a smart phone application. The program collects everything from trip level data to catch and harvest data, economic information, and biological information. Currently they have built in a recreational and commercial data configurations since some fisherman hold multiple licenses. The software has some data entry validation built into it to help prevent data entry mistakes. Many of the questions have pre-populated lists of values to select from that help the fishermen with data entry. The program has the ability to collect angler data that might be useful for the national saltwater angler registry program. This program uses a large amount of validation features to ensure integrity. Users must have a login and port agents can have immediate access to vessel computer database if necessary. The software tracks all changes made to a trip in the database. Data is stored as .xml files and are either sent by the user, by a time event, or declarations based on a change GPS location. Reports are sent as .xml via email and can be secured or encrypted. **S. Atran** asked if they have implemented any recreational reporting systems. **Henniger** mentioned they have a pilot program in Australian recreational private fishery. **M. Rowell** mentioned the Olfish program looked very sophisticated and asked if the average person that is not computer skilled can be taught how to do this. **Henniger** said the program can be scaled back and is easy to learn how to use. **E. Sapp** asked about costs of software, licensing, and monthly subscriptions. **Barger** mentioned the pilot program is fully funded at no cost to the captains but costs for full implementation are not yet determined. **S. Atran** mentioned an abstract was included with the meeting materials about a presentation that will be given at the next Gulf council meeting. It highlights a simple cheap data collection system that uses cell phone technology. He wanted everyone to take a look at that information.

Project Evaluations

R. Cody mentioned a recommendation on the best proposed methodology is probably outside the scope of this group at this time. Possibly a first step is to develop a vehicle of communication between the various logbook programs and MRIP. **S. Atran** asked how amenable is MRIP to the other data collection plans that have been proposed or is MRIP committed to developing a new pilot program. **P. Pate** stated MRIP is not committed to any particular methodology but is still evaluating all of the options available to them. **R. Andrews** also stated there are certain federal legal requirements that ensure competition for selecting vendors that must ensure best value to the government. **R. Cody** mentioned it is going to take time because we are dealing with federal and state governments and those processes take time. **Cody** also mentioned that we should be hesitant to limit the scope of any logbook program to one species or one area. **Zales** thinks based on the current economic conditions the cost that the fleet would have absorb needs to be a big consideration with any new reporting system. **M. Kasprzak** thinks all of the proposed programs have good aspects but each program depends on self reported data and without good validation methods the data are still going to be heavily questioned. **M. Nugent** mentioned to be careful that no program has full for-hire industry wide support. Some areas of the for-hire industry are unaware of the current proposed changes. **C. Hanson** asked how the dockside intercept survey could be used to help validate self reported data. **Cody** agreed that we need a validation tool that is a proven acceptable method that allows for a useful comparison. **Kasprzak** asked how we would proceed if we develop a validation tool that shows a mismatch between

logbook and validation tool data. **Donaldson** mentioned that we have not developed that method yet but relying on multiple validation tools would be beneficial. **Andrews** stated MRIP will be looking for input from independent review team to help generate methods for using the validation data based on whatever validation tools are developed. Methods will also need to be developed to account for vessels that do not report as 100% compliance is unlikely to achieve. **Simpson** asked if someone could explain past, current, future plans for no cost extensions to the plan for VMS implementation. **Crabtree** stated for the past several years NOAA Fisheries has reimbursed captains for the price of the least expensive accepted unit. Captains are required to pay for installation and there is also a monthly fee associated with the unit. A similar plan would likely be used for an electronic logbook program if adopted. **T. Putnam** mentioned mandatory reporting needs to have a penalty associated with it before it might start working. **Cody** asked Henniger if their program can pair the catch data with VMS software. Henniger said the software has its own GPS feed so it can be location tagged at the time of entry. **C. Denson** mentioned that the need for real-time data needs to be defined (daily, every week, or bi-weekly). **Zales** mentioned the GOMARS project only requires daily reporting for basic information (trip date, number of anglers). Then the landings and details would be submitted on a weekly basis. **Kasprzak** stated that LDWF is trying to work with MRIP because if the results from their logbook are drastically different they can have a logical response to help explain the differences. **Denson** asked if the commercial IFQ system could be used as template for the recreational for-hire sector. **Andrews** stated that the for-hire workgroup is going to build off several of the existing reporting systems to help with efficiency and cost.

After a long discussion the subcommittee agreed on the following recommendations:

1. Implement a mandatory logbook for trip level reporting in the for-hire sector in Gulf of Mexico
2. Need to consider all available technology for collecting these data.
3. Need to develop a program with compliance and enforcement methods.
4. Need to have a statistically proven validation method.
5. Need to develop pilot programs complimentary with MRIP.
6. Programs need to collect all necessary data elements as determined by fishery managers and stock assessment scientists.
7. Develop outreach and education for any adopted logbook programs as well as promote conversation between MRIP and the various proposed projects.
8. The development and implementation of these methods need to be a cooperative effort between the states, GSMFC, NOAA Fisheries, and the for-hire industry.

S. Atran asked what the timeline would be for pilot projects. **P. Pate** said pilot programs would start likely by October 1, 2009 with programs running into 2010. **Cody** mentioned a full year of data collection might not be necessary. **L. Simpson** mentioned this process is designed as a cooperative effort and working together with the states and federal entities is essential. **Cody** reiterated that data collection needs extend farther than red snapper and we should not neglect state waters species or specific geographic areas.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

**Port Sampler Meeting
Meeting Summary
September 23 and 24, 2008
New Orleans, Louisiana**

Dave Donaldson of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission called the Port Sampler meeting to order on September 23, 2008 at 9:00 a.m. The following were present:

Pete Antosh, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Chuck Armstrong, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Debbie Batiste, NOAA Fisheries, New Orleans, LA
Jay Boulet, NOAA Fisheries, New Orleans, LA
Beth Bourgeon, NOAA, Lafayette, LA
Brittany Breazeale, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Steve Brown, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Melissa Cook, NOAA, Panama City Beach, FL
Mandy Courville, LDWF, Lake Charles, LA
Guy Davenport, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Claudia Dennis, NOAA Fisheries, New Smyrna Beach, FL
Wes Devers, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Kit Doncaster, NOAA Fisheries, Brownsville, TX
Aimee Eschete, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Justin Esslinger, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Noel Estes, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Pamela Brown-Eyo, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Debbie Fable, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Gary Fitzhugh, NOAA, Panama City Beach, FL
Ted Flowers, NOAA Fisheries, Mobile, AL
Aimee Fortier, LDWF, New Orleans, LA
Pam Fuller, USGS, Gainesville, FL
Corey Gabel, NOAA Fisheries, Port Arthur, TX
Michelle Gamby, NOAA Fisheries, Tequesta, FL
Dave Gloeckner, NOAA, Beaufort, NC
Linda Guidry, NOAA Fisheries, New Iberia, LA
Richard Hall, NOAA Fisheries, Wilmington, NC
Brett Hano, LDWF, New Orleans, LA
Kathleen Hebert, NOAA Fisheries, Houma, LA
Tom Herbert, NOAA Fisheries, Fort Myers, FL
Jason Herr, FFWRI, Melbourne, FL
David Hoke, NOAA, N.C.
Jill Jensen, NOAA, New Orleans, LA
Denise Kinsey, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Albert Lefort, LDWF, Cut Off, LA
Brian Linton, NOAA, Miami, FL

Edward Little, NOAA Fisheries, Key West, FL
Linda Lombardi-Carlson, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Edie Lopez, NOAA Fisheries, Brownsville, TX
Alan Lowther, NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
Carlos Llull, FFWRI, Pensacola, FL
Charlotte Mansfield, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Terri Menzel, FFWRI, Pensacola, FL
Gary Moore, FFWCC, Cedar Key, FL
Pam Machuga, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL
Christine Murrell, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Michelle Padgett, NOAA Fisheries, Freeport, TX
Chris Palmer, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City Beach, FL
Liz Pritchard, NOAA, Silver Spring, MD
Edwin Pulido, FFWCC, Lauderhill, FL
Holly Rolls, FFWCC, Marathon, FL
Keith Roberts, NOAA, Galveston, TX
Prince Robinson, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Renee Roman, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL
Gary Rouse, NOAA Fisheries, Cut Off, LA
Charlie Schaefer, NOAA Fisheries, Tequesta, FL
Amanda Shahan, LDWF, Lake Charles, LA
June Weeks, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City Beach, FL
Laura Wiggins, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL

Staff

Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, MS

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as amended.

Discussion of Reproductive Staging of Fishes

G. Fitzhugh and **M. Cook** of NMFS Panama City Lab gave a presentation on Reproductive Staging of Fishes. **Fitzhugh** noted that the Panama City Lab has been doing a lot of work on reproductive biology and age and growth to assist in stock assessments. **Fitzhugh** thanked the port samplers for their help in collecting samples for stock assessments and SEDARs. **Fitzhugh** reviewed the major reproduction components for assessments including sex ratio, sex transition, maturity, and reproductive output at age. **Fitzhugh** also noted the need to collect samples timed to the reproductive cycle. Some important needs are to have more port agents and observers looking at more fish at more times in more places, training, and quality control sampling. **Fitzhugh** displayed many photos in his presentation which included determining the sex of a fish, the maturity of a fish, and reproductive output. **Fitzhugh** also noted the importance of hands-on training, and devising a way to take samples without having the problem of storage space.

M. Cook then addressed the group on gonad classification systems, noting that there are various classification systems and sometimes it is difficult for everyone to be on the same page at the same time.

Golden Tilefish Sampling and Ageing Techniques

L. Lombardi NMFS Panama City Lab reported that in 2005 she addressed the port agents meeting in an attempt to get more focused sampling on the golden tilefish since it is up for assessment in 2010. **Lombardi** noted the tremendous cooperation she has received from the port samplers and thanked them for their efforts. **Lombardi's** presentation then reviewed federal and state port agents sampling effort over a four year period for otoliths and gonads as well as ageing procedures. The presentation then compared otolith weight vs. fish length and otolith weight vs. age, and also gonad sampling in the Gulf of Mexico compared to the east coast of Florida. **Lombardi** requested more samples and stressed the importance of having an intact gonad – at least 90%, and taken during the reproductive season.

Lombardi reported that B. Barnett at the Panama City Lab has been working on the otolith chemistry of the red snapper has requested red snapper otoliths from the Tampa/St. Petersburg area and south.

Discussion of TIP Issues

D. Gloeckner, TIP coordinator, NMFS Beaufort Lab discussed additional data elements that he would like to incorporate into TIP data collection at the suggestion of J. Hoenig of Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS). **Gloeckner** stated that trip ticket number and fisherman license number are needed to increase the matching rate between TIP and trip ticket data. He also noted that in the future there may be mandatory electronic reporting which may incorporate some elements from logbooks to identify a trip. **Gloeckner** reported that NMFS is currently working on a new export function and electronic measuring board upload for TIP online. J. Hoenig received a grant to evaluate the TIP program and he traveled with samplers to evaluate sampling methods being used. Hopefully this information will aid in rewriting the TIP sampling manual. **Gloeckner** then gave examples of bias resulting in smaller mean size fish and noted that it is necessary to have weight of landings for each trip. He suggested that samplers use cluster sampling, sorted samples, or interrupted sampling. **Gloeckner** noted that further evaluation of TIP data is necessary to determine the extent of biases in historical data and methods to account for biases.

Discussion of Hurricane Relief Efforts for Fishing Industry

P. Robinson of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) gave a presentation on hurricane relief efforts for fisheries. In 2007 Congress authorized \$41.3 million in federal funds for commercial and recreational fisheries affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. **Robinson** listed the requirements for fishermen to qualify for these funds, including trip ticket sales or purchases and they must also have held a resident Louisiana vessel license. The recreational total was \$11,539,086, the commercial total was \$27,670,264 and administration costs were \$2,063,650. **Robinson** noted that in order to inform fishermen and dealers about this program several public meetings were held throughout Louisiana, as well information on the LDWF website, radio, magazines, and newspapers. The South Central Planning and Development Commission handled the distribution and processing of applications for assistance.

Discussion of Monitoring of Non-Native Species

P. Fuller of the U.S. Geological Survey gave a presentation on non-native species, also known as nonindigenous, non-native, or invasive species. **Fuller** reported that she manages the nonindigenous aquatic species (NAS) database maintained by the U.S. Geological Survey in Gainesville, Florida. This database tracks over 1500 marine and freshwater animals and plants nationwide. **Fuller** stressed the importance of early detection of these species and the important work port samplers can do by reporting anything unusual from commercial vessels and fishermen. **Fuller** also noted that if port agents needed help in identifying the species the following website would be helpful, <http://www.anstaskforce.gov/experts>. Port agents were also provided with a web address for the nonindigenous aquatic species (NAS) database (<http://nas.er.usgs.gov>). 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, name of port sampler, and how the species was collected. Port agents should save specimens whenever possible but high quality photographs are useful when specimens can not be collected. **Fuller** requested that port agents notify her as soon as possible when finding a nonindigenous species.

Discussion of Representative Sampling Philosophies

B. Linton of NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center presented an overview on the subject of representative sampling by explaining that the sample should accurately reflect the distribution of variables in the target population. The relevant variables are size and age structure of that landed catch. **Linton** mentioned several variables in a random sample, including different types of gear, different vessels, different times of the year, etc.

In order to illustrate different sampling philosophies **Linton** used a case study from the 1960's that is considered a classic, the blue fish fishery.

Discussion of Law Enforcement Issues

S. Campbell of NOAA Fisheries Law Enforcement in Slidell, Louisiana reported that he works criminal investigations which are violations of the Lacey Act and civil investigations which are violations of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. His area encompasses Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana with species such as Gulf reef fish, sharks, tuna, highly migratory species, red drum, grouper, and snapper. **Campbell** discussed the Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) which includes the Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), and noted that after hurricanes Katrina and Rita National Marine Fisheries Service provided LDWF with \$3 million for disaster assistance to purchase boats, fuel, an emergency response station or mobile command center, satellite phones, and other emergency equipment.

Campbell reported that some of the cases they are involved in are health related violations and deal with the harvesting of oysters. Another area of involvement for NOAA Enforcement is sustainable fisheries, particularly sharks and red snapper. **Campbell** relayed several instances of fishermen taking illegal catch, either over the limit, undersized, or closed season in the thousands of pounds. **Campbell** encouraged port agents to be observant and aware of their surroundings when possible and also requested that anyone interested in a career in NOAA Law Enforcement contact NOAA.

Discussion of Processed Products Reports

A. **Lowther** of NMFS, Silver Spring office gave a presentation on the Fishery Products Annual Report for U.S. Processors. **Lowther** showed a sample of the fishery products survey form which includes address, employment, product, quantity, and value. **Lowther** noted that this survey is for use by fisheries processors. Completed forms are sent to F-ST1, the data are entered and analyzed. **Lowther** requested that port agents attempt to collect timely, accurate, and more complete data on wholesale value. These data are used by economists, international data reporting requirements, and as background information for the International Trade Commission. This information is never provided to the public and is maintained in a confidential manner pursuant to all laws.

Discussion of New Data Confidentiality Provisions

G. **Davenport** explained the revised Magnuson-Stevens Act Administrative Order 216 which establishes what comprises confidential data. This involves NOAA interaction with state partners, Commissions, and other contractors. Each sampler has read the Administrative Order and signed the statement of non-disclosure. This Administrative Order will be updated and a NMFS policy statement will be included. **Davenport** reviewed the section of the revised Magnuson-Stevens Act dealing with confidentiality and discussion followed. **Davenport** also reported on the purpose and scope of a new Regional Handbook and noted that when a port agent is in doubt in determining what is and what isn't confidential, port agents should call their supervisor.

Other Business

Depending on the budget situation the group discussed various localities for the next port sampler meeting and agreed for a time in mid to late September, 2009 in the Panama City, Florida area. All of the above presentations are available from the offices of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

September 24, 2008

The group took a field trip to crab processors in the New Orleans area.

**Caribbean Port Sampler Meeting
Meeting Summary
September 30, 2008 and October 1, 2008
Mayaguez, Puerto Rico**

On September 30, 2008 the port sampler group visited several fishing locations and markets in Cabo Rojo and Puerto Real. In the afternoon the group toured the Marine Fisheries Laboratory in Mayaguez. Presentations were given on reproductive biology of three important baitfishes in Puerto Rico by N. Pena and Puerto Rico's Queen Conch Assessment by N. Jiminez.

On Wednesday, October 1, 2008 **David Donaldson** of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following were present:

Lucia Vargas Denizard, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Kevin Dupigny, USVI DPNR, St. Thomas, USVI
Jesus Leon Fernandez, PRDNER, Fajardo, PR
Mekisha George, USVIDPNR, St. Thomas, USVI
Ruth Gomez, USVI DPNR, St. Thomas, USVI
Gerald Greaux, Jr., USVI DFW, St. Thomas, USVI
Hector Lopez Pelet, PRDNER/LIP, Barceloneta, PR
Daniel Matos Caraballo, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
January Murray, USVI DPNR, St. Thomas, USVI
Albaliz Mercado Porrata, PRDNER, Cabo Rojo, PR
Hector Rivera, USVI DPNR, St. Croix, USVI
Luis Rivera, PRDNER, Bogueron, PR
William Tobias, USVI DPNR, Frederiksted, USVI
Willy Ventura, USVI DPNR, St. Croix, USVI

Staff

Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Doug Snyder, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Highlights of Puerto Rico Landings 2007

D. Matos Caraballo gave a presentation on Puerto Rico's commercial fisheries statistics program beginning with a brief history of the program and introduction of samplers and the areas they work. **Caraballo** reported that the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (PRDNER) has six regional offices. Fishermen submit their trip ticket reports on a monthly basis to these offices. Every fisherman receives a receipt of their reports. The data received are entered into computers by statistical clerks. Approximately 600 commercial

fishermen reported landings in 2007 of over 1,200,000 pounds. **Matos-Caraballo** reported that the following species were landed: queen snapper, yellowtail snapper, silk snapper, lane snapper, and dolphinfish. Fish families landed included tunas, mackerels, parrotfishes, trunkfishes, and sharks. Spiny lobster made up 12.9% and queen conch made up 11.6% of landings. **Matos-Caraballo** then described the biostatistics methodology used explaining that data from finfish and spiny lobster landings are collected by port agents three days per week. Individuals are identified by species to determine catch composition, then measured and weighed. The data is then entered into the NMFS Trip Interview Program (TIP). In 2007 a total of over 13,000 individuals were measured and a total of 671 trips interviewed.

Matos-Caraballo discussed Puerto Rico's commercial license noting that to be considered a part-time fisherman 20% to 49% of income must be derived from fishing, and 50% and higher is considered full-time commercial fishing. Full-time fishermen receive government financial assistance from the Department of Agriculture. **Matos-Caraballo** noted that many commercial fishermen have come to respect the idea of closed seasons due in part to the amazing recovery of queen conch and silk snapper.

U.S. Virgin Islands Commercial Catch Records

Kevin Dupigny was introduced by **W. Tobias** as the Database Manager for the U.S. Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife. **Dupigny** explained that the main objectives of the commercial catch reporting program is to monitor commercial fishing activity in the U.S. Virgin Islands and the collection of species specific data for population assessments. **Dupigny** explained that commercial fisherman registration is an annual event with registration beginning in early July on the three islands. Various agencies are involved with registration including the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), Agriculture, and the Lieutenant Governors office. After the boats are registered, the office of Licensing and Consumer Affairs issues the commercial fishing licenses. At the time of registration information is available to the fishermen on what they are required to do. This information is available in English and Spanish in the form of booklets and commercial catch report forms. Meeting attendees were provided with copies of these forms. Information collected on the catch report forms include, area fished, duration of the fishing trip, time of fishing trip, trap soak time, gear used and number of gear used. **Dupigny** noted that in order for fishermen to be in compliance all catch reports are due by the 15th of the following month. Fishermen are mandated to allow their catch to be sampled a minimum of four times annually. Some of the information submitted to NOAA Fisheries includes pounds landed by year and record counts by year.

Presentation of U.S. Virgin Islands Trip Interview Program

W. Tobias reported that TIP was instituted by NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center in 1983 in the Caribbean. It is a shorebased sampling program using random size-frequency data and biological samples collected from commercial fishermen. TIP validates catch and effort by observation by trained port samplers. TIP is the standardized database for NMFS Southeast Region. **Tobias** noted that the USVI is currently using three TIP sampling programs. These are the State/Federal Biostatistical Program which began in 1983, the Inter-Jurisdictional Fisheries Program beginning in 1995, and MARFIN in 2008.

Tobias reported that TIP uses standardized field forms. Participation in the program was voluntary until 2007 and has been mandatory since 2008. Port samplers had a discussion on the

differences and problems in sampling in Puerto Rico and the USVI.

Presentation of U.S. Virgin Islands Biostatistical Summaries

W. Tobias reported that the USVI currently has two primary data sources at the DFW. One is the TIP program and the other data are in landings records. There are three datasets for biostatistical information. The State/Federal Cooperative Statistics Program and the Inter-Jurisdictional Fisheries Program have all gear types included and complete catches are required. The MARFIN Program deals with trap and line samples only. **Tobias** gave explanations for various graphs and charts dealing with fisheries statistics.

Other Business

D. Donaldson addressed the group and explained that there are some funding problems and approximately \$500,000 had to be cut from the FIN budget for 2009. Work group meetings have been cut and will be done by conference call. The Gulf and Caribbean port samplers meetings have also been cut since there will not be funds available to conduct these meetings. Hopefully these meetings will be held again in the future.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Following the meeting the port samplers traveled as a group to various fishing locations and markets in Rincon and Aquadilla.

FIN Otolith Processors Training Workshop
Meeting Summary
May 19-20, 2009
St. Petersburg, Florida

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

Alison Amick, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Jessica Carroll, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Laura Crabtree, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Janet Tunnell, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
David Westmark, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Brandy Coates, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Jaime Miller, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Debbie Belk, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Wes Devers, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Isis Longo, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Kym Walsh, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Kathy Brown, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Tonie Saylor, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Robert Allman, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Beverly Barnett, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Carrie Fioramonti, NMFS, Panama City, FL
David Berrane, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Chris Palmer, NMFS, Panama City, FL
Andy Fischer, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
Gary Gray, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Daryl Parkyn, UF, Gainesville, FL
Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Conducting Otolith Reading Exercise for Black Drum, Red Drum, Spotted Seatrout, Gray Triggerfish, King Mackerel, Flounders, Sheepshead, Striped Mullet, Gray Snapper, Red Snapper and Vermilion Snapper

The first day 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.

The meeting was recessed at 3:30 p.m.

May 20, 2009

The meeting was reconvened at 9:00 a.m.

Discussion of Sheepshead Reference Set

W. Devers reported that the sheepshead set has been completed and was distributed to the appropriate agencies for reading. The APE for the reference set was 3.91% which is well within the 5% standard. W. Devers noted Mississippi has found that there may be some sexually-dimorphic coloration in sheepshead. It appears that green coloration near the head indicated the fish is female which a blue coloration indicates a male. Mississippi will continue to examine this issue and keep the group apprised of any findings. It was noted that a similar situation was found with red porgy. The set will be distributed again to the states and the results of the readings will be presented to the group at the May 2010 meeting.

Discussion of Red Snapper Reference Set

R. Allman stated that most of the agencies' APEs were below the 5% standard. It was noted that Texas has not yet provided their ages and only Alabama and Mississippi were above the 5% standard although not significantly higher. For Alabama, there has been some new staff hired which contributed to the higher APE and for Mississippi, it was noted that they do not see red snapper on a regular basis which lead to the higher APEs. R. Allman suggested that if states are only reading a handful of otoliths throughout the year, they could send the otoliths to Panama City for analysis instead of reading them themselves. This might alleviate some of the problems that are arising. D. Donaldson noted that as long as the number of otoliths was small (~10-20/year), this should be fine. D. Donaldson also stated that it was imperative that the Panama City staff age these otoliths in a timely manner (with one year) so the information would be available in the FIN Data Management System. It was noted that several of the slides have been damaged which makes them difficult to read. It was suggested that these slides be removed and the set will be reduced to 200 randomly-selected otoliths. The group agreed with this approach. The results of the readings will be presented to the group at the May 2010 meeting.

Discussion of Flounder Reference Set

A. Fischer distributed documentation regarding the set. It was noted that the APEs were 3.22% for all states. While this is lower than last year and within range of the standard, there are still some issues regarding assigning the margin codes. There was quite a bit of variability throughout the year which suggested that additional training in margin code analysis would be beneficial. The group could focus on this issue at the next processors meeting. The set will be distributed to the appropriate agencies and the results of the readings will be presented to the group at the May 2010 meeting.

From this discussion, the group began talking about the issue of ages for the reference sets. The standard is to provide one age per agency vs. having an age for each reading within an agency. All of the reference sets are using this standard with the exception of black drum. The reason for having an age for each reading with an agency for black drum is because the set is new and there are some issues with the ages in this set. Once all the agencies have aged the set and these issues have been resolved, the standard of one age per agency will be used for the black drum reference set.

Discussion of King Mackerel Reference Set

C. Palmer stated that the overall APE for king mackerel was 7.45%. All of the states were under the 5% standard for the sectioned otoliths (average 4.87%) but the whole otoliths (average (10.04%)) caused some problems and were the main factor in the higher APEs. C. Palmer noted that the state ages will be used in modeling for the upcoming king mackerel stock assessment. The reference set will again be distributed to the various agencies and the results of the readings will be presented to the group at the May 2010 meeting.

Discussion of Red drum/Spotted Seatrout/Striped Mullet Reference Sets

J. Tunnell stated that each agency read the reference sets and the APEs for striped mullet, spotted seatrout and red drum were 7.12%, 3.15% and 2.36%, respectively. While the seatrout and red drum APEs were fine, there were some problems with the striped mullet APE. The issue for striped mullet, like some other species, stemmed from margin codes issues. It appeared that the ring counts were correct but there was high variability with the margin codes. As with flounder, this issue needs to be addressed during the reading exercise next year. The sets will again be distributed and the results of the readings will be presented to the group at the May 2010 meeting.

Discussion of Vermilion Snapper Reference Set

R. Allman reported that there are 150 otoliths in the reference set. Currently the set is being read by the NOAA Fisheries staff in Panama City only in order to work out some of the issues with the set. There has been some variability between readers which may be due to using different scopes for reading. They will be further exploring this issue. Also, it was pointed out that when sectioning these otoliths, they should be cut very thinly (~.33 mm). Once the issues have been resolved, the set will be distributed to the states, starting from the east and travelling west. The results of the readings will be presented to the group at the May 2010 meeting.

Discussion of Black Drum Reference Set

S. VanderKooy stated that reference set has been completed. It has been distributed to the states and results from 4 of the 5 states have been received. There have been some issues with the margin codes similar to the problems seen in other species. S. VanderKooy is working the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory to determine the correct age for each of the slides. Because of these issues, the APEs have not yet been calculated. However, once the issues have been resolved, the set will be sent to Texas to finalize the reading and the results of the readings will be presented to the group at the May 2010 meeting.

The group then discussed the issues related to margin codes. Since there appears to be issues with margin codes for several species, it was suggested that instead of eyeballing it, readers could actually measure the distance to determine the margin code. It was pointed out that while this would give readers a more accurate measure, it greatly increases the amount of time it takes to process the otolith. Also, if FIN modifies the codes now, it could jeopardize the usefulness of the data. It was noted that this issue was extensively discussed by the otolith manual group when they developed the processors manual. It was suggested that it would be interesting to conduct a test to measure the differences between eyeballing and actual measurement. T. Saylor mentioned that Texas has the equipment to conduct such a test; however, the equipment is not operating at this time. D. Donaldson stated he would contact Britt Bumguardner and explore the possibility of fixing the equipment in order to conduct such a test. G. Gray noted that GCRL has equipment to conduct this test and will be exploring the possibility of accomplishing it.

Discussion of Gray Triggerfish Reference Set

C. Fioramonti reported that she is working with Walter Ingram regarding the processing and ageing of spines. She is attempting to compile 100 spines for the set. She again asked each state to provide her with 20 spines that have been processed. She will compile the samples and will have a reference set available at the May 2010 meeting.

Discussion of Developing Reference Sets for Other Species

D. Donaldson stated that FIN has developed reference sets for all the primary species with the exception of gag grouper and red grouper. Initially, it was decided that Janet Tunnell and Gary Fitzhugh would be responsible for developing these sets. However, it was pointed out these species are mainly caught in Florida and are the only state that have significant sampling targets for these species. It was noted that NOAA Fisheries Panama City has sets for these species so Florida will work with the Panama City staff to ensure consistency in reading. If the other states collect gag and red grouper, they will send the samples to the Panama City lab for processing. As earlier stated, D. Donaldson noted it was imperative that these otoliths be aged in a timely manner (with one year) so the information would be available in the FIN Data Management System. It was also noted that it is important that the unique FIN identifier be kept so the ageing data can be linked to the collection information. B. Barnett and G. Bray discussed some of the issues related to this topic and will coordinate to ensure all of the necessary information is available.

Status of Otolith Manual Revision

S. VanderKooy stated that the drafts for the new sections have been distributed to the appropriate group. It appears that section 3 of the document needs the most reviews and the group needs to review the timelines to ensure that they are clear and accurate. The group proceeded to examine the timelines for each of the species. It was decided that the spawning periods after the first year needed to be removed from the timelines. The revised otolith manual represents the administrative record for this portion of the meeting.

Discussion of Future Training Meeting

The group 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 week of May 2010. D. Donaldson stated that he would develop a draft agenda prior to the meeting and distribute it to everyone for comment.

Status of Greater Amberjack Ageing Techniques

D. Parkyn provided an overview of the greater amberjack activities he and Deb Murie have been examining at the University of Florida. The goals of the project was to determine age and growth, and age and size of sexual maturity, of greater amberjack in the Gulf of Mexico. The project established ageing criteria for greater amberjack based on sectioned otoliths and validated the method using marginal-increment analysis. It also compared ageing criteria with greater amberjack studies in the Atlantic and developed a "seamless" ageing methodology for greater amberjack in Gulf and the Atlantic case of future composite stock assessments. It was noted that fecundity for amberjack is unknown and is currently based on weight proxy and age/size of sexual maturity is not definitive. The project also looked at the comparative ageing criteria for greater amberjack using fin rays as an alternative aging method as well as modeling

region-, fishery-, and gear-specific age and growth. These models will provide statistical inference for decisions on pooling of age-length information between regions, fisheries, and gears for stock assessment purposes. Also, the project attempted to construct age-length keys if appropriate. The project also provided ageing methodology for inclusion in an updated module for greater amberjack in *A Practical Handbook for Determining the Ages of Gulf of Mexico Fishes*. These objects were accomplished by collaborating with federal and state agencies to process greater amberjack otoliths, throughout its range in the Gulf of Mexico, stratified by region, fishery, and gear. He provided a brief overview of the age and growth studies conducted for greater amberjack and discussed some of the potential biases of the current data. It was noted that 1,838 otoliths with accompanying lengths and weights were examined from a total of 1,983 amberjack. There were also 769 gonad samples collected that were used in reproductive analysis. The otolith samples were obtained from a variety of sources included the National Marine Fisheries Service Panama City Lab (commercial long line and hook and line; recreational hook and line and head boat hook and line), Fisheries Information Network (FIN) (Louisiana (437) and Alabama (313)) and research sampling especially for undersized fish. The length of the collected fish ranged from 74 -1829 mm. For the charter boat, the range was 535-1829 mm FL (n=747). For the private recreational, the range was 590-1474 mm FL (n=155). The commercial samples ranged from 680-1476 mm FL (n=192). The head boat samples ranged from 287-1245 mm FL (n=414) and the scientific samples ranged from 74-1400mm FL (n=330). The primary method of ageing for greater amberjack is a thin, cross-section of sagittal otolith. Validation includes index of completion of the marginal increment. Some of the problems with ageing amberjack otoliths include that they are thin and fragile, the anuli not very distinct, a high rate of unreadable otoliths ($\geq 15\%$), edge difficult to distinguish and between-reader precision low for a relatively short-lived fish species ($\sim 42.5\%$ perfect agreement (Age range of 0-13 years); $85.4\% \pm 1$ year). The top of the joint of opercular bones and the boss of the eye socket serve as convenient and consistent landmarks for otolith removal. Although fragile, amberjack otoliths can be removed rapidly and without breakage if cuts are done carefully. He presented several graphs that showed a close relationship between the length and weight of the otolith and length and weight of the fish. The processing method was that the otoliths were weighed and measured along several planes with optical software. They were embedded in a variety of materials to provide support for otolith and it was determined that Devcon 5 minute Epoxy proved superior for cutting with a low-speed Bueller Isomet 1000 diamond saw. He reviewed several ways of potentially improving the readability of amberjack otolith which included embedding, staining with Sanderson's Rapid Bone Stain, sanding and polishing both with and without staining (although this is time consuming) and low speed cutting (100-120 rpm) with the sections coated with Flotex to increase clarity. He showed several examples embedded, stained and polished otoliths. He presented a slide that showed the mean length at age for both male and female fish which demonstrated there was little difference between the sexes. He also presented a slide that showed the fishery-specific growth of greater amberjack in the Gulf of Mexico. This slide showed that there were differences in growth among the various fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. Lastly, he discussed the use of fin rays and spines as an alternative ageing structure. They exploring which fins provide that best structure and if a specific ray looks good, then they will ask for some collections if/when possible. This is still in the preliminary stages and will keep the group apprised of their progress.

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. Carroll, J. Tunnell and A. Amick calculated APEs for all species. The following table outlines the APEs for each species and provides a historical look (where applicable) for those species.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Black drum					0.67%	0.21%	2.67%
Red drum					0.52%	4.35%	1.63%
Spotted seatrout					0.00%	4.55%	1.17%
Gray triggerfish					16.81%	21.79%	16.02%
King mackerel			13.60%	2.88%	11.51%	6.48%	13.12%
S. flounder		10.54%	9.51%	4.00%	2.86%	8.78%	3.03%
Sheepshead					0.42%	8.72%	2.96%
Striped mullet					6.97%	7.48%	9.84%
Gray snapper					3.19%	9.22%	1.80%
Red snapper	16.01%	4.97%	5.58%	3.32%	1.14%	6.04%	3.55%
Vermilion snapper					6.10%	16.32%	8.54%

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. Overall, the APEs for all the species were at or below the 5% threshold. Where the APEs exceeded the 5% standard, there was usually one or two otoliths where there were discrepancies which were caused by differences in the interpretation of the margin codes. It was pointed out that even though there were differences, all groups were usually within 1 year of the actual age. The exception to this statement was king mackerel and gray triggerfish. For mackerel, it was noted that many of the whole otoliths were not properly dried and as the day progressed, it became increasingly more difficult to read them. For triggerfish, there was still confusion on what were actually rings and the group agreed there is still a need for additional training and the importance of having the experts at this meeting.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

**ComFIN Data Collection Work Group
Conference Call Summary
April 21, 2009**

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

Members

Nancie Cummings (proxy for Guy Davenport), NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Steve Brown, FFWRI, Saint Petersburg, FL
Chris Denson, ALDCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Michelle Kasprzak, LADWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Staff

Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Ken Brennan, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC

Determine the extent of the commercial live market activities in the Gulf of Mexico

Gregg Bray mentioned that this issue was brought up by the most recent FIN facilitated session and his work group was tasked with determining if the existing commercial data collection methods in the Gulf of Mexico are collecting bait and marine life landings sufficiently. Bray mentioned that after contacting all the Gulf States each state does have live bait landings and every state is collecting data on their live bait fishery except for Alabama. Alabama only requires seafood dealers to report landings through the trip ticket system and bait dealers are not considered seafood dealers. Chris Denson stated that this would be very difficult to change as it would require changing state law. Michelle Kasprzak stated that Louisiana is working to improve their ability to enumerate live bait landings. Hopefully by January 2010 Louisiana will have implemented bait codes to their trip ticket system that will allow them to easily identify live bait landings. The marine life/aquarium fishery is only significant in Florida and Steve Brown mentioned Florida has developed a coding scheme and reporting system to collect the marine life landings. Florida trip ticket data can be used to generate total numbers of marine life animals harvested and the value of those landings. **After further discussion the group recommended that the live market activities in the Gulf of Mexico are well covered through the existing commercial trip ticket program.**

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

FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group**Conference Call Summary
April 28, 2009**

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

Members

Harry Blanchet, LADWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Kerwin Cuevas, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS
Britt Bumguardner, TPWD, Palacios, TX
John Mareska, ALDCNR, Dauphin Island, AL
Bob Muller, FWC/FMRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Nancie Cummings (proxy for G. Davenport), NOAA Fisheries SEFSC, Miami, FL

Staff

Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Gary Fitzhugh, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Steve Turner, NOAA Fisheries SEFSC, Miami, FL
Linda Lombardi, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Chris Palmer, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Beverly Barnett, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Wes Devers, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS
Erick Porche, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS

Review of 2008 Otolith Collection Reports

G. Bray described the results presented in the spreadsheet comparing otoliths collected and total landings for 2008 for the FIN priority species. **Bray** mentioned that each state seemed to be doing a decent job of reaching targets and the comparison of landings distribution and otolith sampling across states was decent. The group noted a few discrepancies in recreational mode with respect to greater amberjack and king mackerel. For both species the majority of Gulf of Mexico landings came from Florida but otolith collections in Florida fell well short of their sampling target. **S. Turner** asked why Florida came up short on several of their sampling targets in recreational mode for greater amberjack, king mackerel, black drum, gray triggerfish, red grouper, and sheepshead. **B. Muller** mentioned he did not have that information available from the samplers and that **Richard Cody** would be better suited to answer that question. **Bray** said he would contact **Cody** and let everyone know what feedback he provided. **Bray** also mentioned the otolith collections for red drum and spotted seatrout in Louisiana were funded by the state agency which is why there was no tally for these species in Louisiana. **Bray** mentioned he would attempt to get a tally directly from the state and include that in future reports for informational purposes. Commercial mode also showed a couple discrepancies with the biggest being the lack of gray triggerfish otoliths collected in Texas. **B. Bumguardner** mentioned that it is possible the locality where gray triggerfish are landed is in an area where little biosampling

effort is located although gray triggerfish is not a big target species in Texas. He said he would look into that issue further with Texas Parks and Wildlife staff. **W. Devers** mentioned Mississippi samplers are not allowed to take gray triggerfish spines fish houses because it will decrease the market value of the product. **H. Blanchet** noted that this is also a problem in Louisiana. **H. Blanchet** mentioned that Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries samplers spend a lot of time collecting greater amberjack samples when the total landings for the state are fairly small. **Donaldson** mentioned the target generation method identified two cells of significance for greater amberjack splitting them into the eastern and western Gulf of Mexico. Since the majority of greater amberjack landings in the western Gulf of Mexico come from Louisiana the target for Louisiana is fairly high. **Donaldson** suggested that we might possibly change the cells of significance to one for greater amberjack thus basically distributing the target based on landings. That would shift the majority of the sampling burden to Florida for greater amberjack. **Blanchet** suggested that we first must determine if age structure of the harvest for greater amberjack is different between the eastern and western Gulf of Mexico. If there are no differences we can then use one cell of significance for greater amberjack. **The group recommended that we ask Debra Murie with the University of Florida to take a look at this issue to help us determine if there are differences in the age structure of the harvest.** **Donaldson** mentioned that **Murie** will be attending the upcoming Gulf of Mexico otolith processors meeting and we would discuss this issue with her then. **S. Turner also suggested we should ask Murie what percentage of the collected greater amberjack otoliths were readable to help determine if collection efforts are worthwhile and should continue.** **G. Fitzhugh** shared reports the NOAA Fisheries Panama City Lab staff generated detailing federal otolith collections. **Bray** mentioned that he again noted differences between what FIN was provided from TIP sampling and the reports generated by **Fitzhugh** and staff. **L. Lombardi** mentioned it usually takes a few months to get a final tally on all the hard parts collected from the previous year. **Bray** asked if it was useful that FIN attempted to track the TIP samples throughout the sampling season along with producing a final tally at the end of the season. The group agreed that it is useful from a validation and information dissemination standpoint for FIN to continue producing monthly summary reports of FIN and TIP otolith collections. **Lombardi** asked if there was a system in place for tracking state feedback to monthly otolith tracking reports. **Bray** mentioned that GSMFC staff would produce a summary of monthly feedback obtained from each state. This information would be beneficial for explaining shortfalls in sampling efforts at the end of the year. **After further discussion the group agreed to recommend to the FIN Committee that FIN continue to use the current targets for biological sampling in 2010 with the exception of looking into the specific issues of greater amberjack age structure and target calculation.**

Bray also discussed the need for reviewing the otolith collections and comparison with landings data with appropriate state personnel prior to convening this workgroup. **Donaldson** mentioned that we propose to review these results with the state supervisors at our annual March recreational data review meeting as all state representatives there have a closer relationship with biological samplers and are better suited to answer specific sampling questions. We would then bring their feedback and results to this workgroup to help answer any questions the workgroup might have and focus their efforts on the science and methods behind the target calculation methods. Everyone agreed this would be a good addition to this review process.

There being no further business, the call adjourned at 10:02 a.m.



APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**OYSTER TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY
June 22, 2009**

Moderator, **Steve VanderKooy** called the conference call to order at 9:15 a.m. The following members and were in attendance:

Members

Priscilla Weeks, Houston Advanced Research Center, Woodlands, TX
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
Bill Arnold, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL

Staff

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

This was our third GoToMeeting web conferencing and conference call combination to review Priscilla Weeks Section 11.0 Social and Cultural Characteristics of Oyster Fishermen and Their Communities.

First off, **Weeks** thanked **Arnold** for sending his comments; they were helpful and have been incorporated into the latest draft. **Weeks** then did a brief overview of the document.

11.1 Introduction – There were no changes or comments made.

11.2 Gulf Oyster Fishermen

The fourth sentence in the first paragraph was reworded – “Some leaseholders and their employees harvest from public reefs both for direct sale and for relay to their private leases, leading to some shared work practices. However, with the exception of Louisiana, the majority of oyster fishermen in the Gulf are non-lease fishermen.”

11.2.1 Cultural Characteristics of Oyster Fishermen

Weeks stated that some of this section was lifted directly from the previous FMP.

In the first paragraph, **Berrigan** suggested citing Dugas et al. NOAA Technical Report NFMS 127 September 1997 titled “The History and Status of Oyster and Other Molluscs of the Gulf of Mexico”. **VanderKooy** will try to get this reference and forward to **Weeks** and the rest of the TTF. **Arnold** suggested that Clyde McKenzie may have some more recent references that include Dugas.

11.2.2.1 Family Interaction and Family Businesses

Weeks reported that she has tried to contact both Deseran and Riden (No Date) to get a hardcopy of this reference but with no luck. **VanderKooy** will try the GRCL library.

11.3.1 Structure of the Community

Arnold suggested that the last paragraph be expanded upon.

11.3.2 Changing Economic Strategies

Weeks reported that she has received more reports on the Galveston Bay reefs and can tighten up this section.

The last sentence needs to be worded something like: "Wives of fishermen are increasingly finding employment outside of the fishing industry." This sentence should be moved and made the second sentence in the paragraph and then **Weeks** will need to work on a transition sentence.

11.3.3 Demographic Changes – There were no changes or comments.

11.4.1 Science based regulation – There were no changes or comments.

11.4.2 Cooperative Management and Research

Arnold stated that this section is very well written and that everyone in fisheries should read it.

11.5 Productions and Marketing Relations

Weeks stated that she is uncomfortable with this section and that she would have a hard time defending it. **Berrigan** stated that he believes that this does belong in the Sociology section. **Weeks** questioned if these statements are still true and correct and that she will need more information and some help fleshing this out. TTF members discussed moving this within document i.e. section 11.2.2.2 and possibly titled Business Interaction or move under section 11.3.1 Structure of the Community.

11.6 Fishery Conflicts

Weeks reported that this section was lifted from the old FMP and is not a very strong section. Does this section even still belong? In paragraph three that starts with "Conflicts between tongers and dredgers"...this is not true in Mississippi and Texas leases are considered private property, so it falls to the lease-owner to police and prosecute. **VanderKooy** suggested that everybody look at the real and perceived conflicts in their states and send them to **Weeks** along with any citations. These include user group conflicts, etc.

11.7 Acute Stressors

The introduction paragraph on acute stressors may include: hurricanes, oil spills, flooding, drought and harmful algal blooms; in a social perspective only.

After each of one of these events the loss of infrastructure, time out of work = loss of participants, loss of resource, results or effects can be Chronic Stressors.

11.7.1.1 This section was re-titled Gulf Hurricanes

Add the use of fishermen in the recovery efforts, POLR, EDRP II, etc.

11.7.1.2 Oil Spills

11.7.1.3 Flooding

11.7.1.4 Drought

11.7.1.5 Harmful Algal Blooms

11.7.2 Land Use Changes and the Disappearance of Working Waterfronts

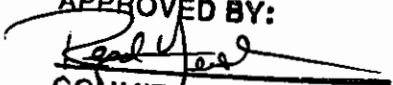
This is a well written section and some minor comments were made.

Next Meeting

The proposed dates for the next meeting are September 14-16, 2009 in New Orleans, LA. After a brief discussion, a consensus was made to meet ½ day on Monday, all day Tuesday and ½ day on Wednesday. **Arnold** requested that some decision be made on stock assessment at the next meeting. **VanderKooy** will meet with Fulford at GCRL in the next couple of weeks to get a status and update the group on the progress.

The call ended at 11:07 a.m.

**SEAMAP - GULF, SOUTH ATLANTIC
AND CARIBBEAN SUBCOMMITTEES
JOINT MINUTES**
Charleston, SC
August 4, 2009

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

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

Members:

John Mareska ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Read Hendon, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Bob McMichael, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
James Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Elizabeth Wenner, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Patrick Campfield, ASMFC, Washington, DC
Roger Pugliese, SAFMC, Charleston, SC
William Tobias, VIDPNR-DFW, Frederikstead, St. Croix USVI
Aida Rosario, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Tina Udouj, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Patrick Geer, GADNR, Brunswick, GA
Wilson Laney, USFWS, Raleigh, NC
Doug Vaughan, NOAA/NMFS, Beaufort, NC

Others:

Lisa Desfosse, NOAA, Pascagoula, MS
Ellie F. Roche, NOAA/NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Jeanne Boylan, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Larry DeLancey, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Richard Waller, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
John Walter, SEFSC, Miami, FL
John Carmichael, SAFMC, Charleston, SC
Kevin Hart, NCDMF, Washington, NC
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Staff:

Terry Henwood, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Karen Mitchell, NOAA, 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

Items 6 and 7 will be switched and with this change, the agenda was adopted.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the August 12, 2008 meeting were approved as submitted.

Overview of SEAMAP-Gulf

J. Hanifen reported the Fall Plankton Survey took place from September 4-30, 2008. Ninety-one stations were sampled across the 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 September 23 to November 20, 2008, from off Tampa, Florida to the U.S.-Mexican border. Four hundred seventy-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 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 Winter Shrimp/Groundfish Survey took place from January 21 to February 24. One hundred fifteen stations were sampled during the survey that uses protocols similar to the other shrimp/groundfish surveys. A new Spring Shrimp/Groundfish Survey also took place from March 15-17 collecting data at 31 stations.

The SEAMAP Winter Plankton Survey took place from February 4 to March 16, 2009. Ichthyoplankton samples were collected at 137 SEAMAP stations. 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 March 29 to June 1, 2009. Ichthyoplankton samples were collected at 79 stations. Gulf waters were sampled from the west Florida shelf to the Louisiana/Texas border. This was the twenty-eighth 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 Inshore Longline Survey is currently ongoing. Mississippi completed 48 stations between March and July, 2009. They added new areas this year with one north of Dauphin Island, Alabama and one south of Dauphin Island. This nearshore survey will complement 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 also to collect environmental data.

The primary purpose of the Reefish Survey is to assess relative abundance and compute population estimates of reef fishes found on natural reef fish habitat in the Gulf of Mexico. NMFS conducted reefish sampling with fish traps and video cameras from April 14 to May 29, 2009 on the OREGON II. Approximately 254 stations were sampled.

The SEAMAP Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey was conducted from June 1 to July 17, 2009. This was the twenty-eighth 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.

Overview of SEAMAP-South Atlantic

R. Pugliese reported on the various South Atlantic work groups:

Coastal Survey - The increase in funding allowed for an increase in sampling in 2009 adding ten additional stations. They sampled 102 stations in all seasons during 2008. All trawls were towed in shallow coastal waters (15-30 feet). The number of stations sampled within each stratum is determined annually by optimal allocation. They randomly select stations from the pool of stations in each stratum. Almost a year of Coastal Survey data has been entered into the database. Their priority species include horseshoe crab, sharks, blue crab, shrimp and weakfish. The group will begin development of a 20 year report on the survey. This is the longest running survey in the South Atlantic and this data will be useful in ecosystem considerations such as mapping bottom habitat and possibly using the data in Ecopath models or linking with ocean observing programs.

Bottom Mapping, Fish Habitat Characterization and Assessment and Adult Red Drum Longline Surveys - South Carolina changed the gear and increased sampling in 2007 to include four areas, Winyah Bay, Charleston Harbor, Port Royal Sound, and St. Helena Sound. During the 2008

sampling season, 582 longline sets were made in four strata along the coast of South Carolina from March through December. The season was broken down into five, two-month time periods. Each time period and stratum was sampled equally. Two hundred red drum were caught in 2008 during sampling. Winyah Bay yielded the highest numbers of red drum (84) followed by Charleston Harbor (52), Port Royal Sound (41) and Saint Helena Sound (17). One hundred and three red drum were tagged and released, nine were recaptured, fifteen were given to the Mariculture project at SCDNR for brood stock, and 62 were sacrificed for age/growth and reproductive investigations. Stomach samples and filets were also collected for diet determination and mercury analysis. Some fish were also surveyed for parasite fauna.

In 2009, sampling began in St. Helena Sound and Port Royal Sound in July. Due to decreases in funding from the various funding sources that support this project, sampling has been concentrated from late summer through late fall in order to maximize encounters with red drum during sampling. Sampling will continue in two-month time periods in each of the four stratum.

North Carolina samples inshore and at night. The North Carolina red drum long line survey took place in 2007 and 2008 over 13 week periods from July to October. Over these two years 144 samples have been collected, collecting 677 red drum ($n_{2007}=404$ and $n_{2008}=273$). Some non-random sampling did occur in order to collect aging samples and also for exploratory purposes to evaluate when and where sampling was effective. Non-random sampling took place as early as May and as late as November. During these random sets 96 red drum were landed.

All of the red drum landed were between 25 and 51 inches TL (635 to 1,295 mm TL). Ages were obtained from 183 red drum in 2007 using otoliths, while 27 fish from 2008 have yet to be aged. The aged fish were between 3 and 43 years olds, representing 25 year classes.

A total of 660 red drum have been tagged from random and non-random sets, with 19 (2.8%) red drum having been recaptured. In 2007 eleven fish were recaptured, while in 2008 eight fish have been recaptured.

Sampling for 2009 began the week of July 20. During sampling 16 red drum were collected.

Georgia is working on obtaining a Biological Opinion to carry out their survey. Their boat has been in dry dock this year, so they just began sampling this week. They have been capturing many sharks as bycatch.

Another expansion project of the South Atlantic is coordinating a SEAMAP component to MARMAP surveys. One area is undertaking a depth-stratified diet sampling of red porgy and grey triggerfish. Another project is the annual estimation of juvenile gag abundance and development of a gag grouper pre-recruitment index (ingress monitoring, 11 sites Beaufort to Jacksonville). SEAMAP support has enabled an expansion to more sampling sites.

The database management responsibilities for SEAMAP have been shifted from NMFS Pascagoula, MS to a relational database housed at SCDNR in Charleston. The database will include data from the SEAMAP-SA Coastal Survey, bottom mapping, fish habitat characterization and assessment (MARMAP and Adult Red Drum Longline Surveys), Pamlico

Sound Survey and Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise. The database consists of several tables including events, collections, species and longline, finfish, shellfish, and turtle tables. They have sorted out codes for species and area and are now converting data into the system. The Coastal Survey has almost a full year of data entered and the Pamlico Sound Survey will have data uploaded within the month. SEAMAP-SA data from the MARMAP cooperative studies will be easily moved into the system as MARMAP's database was used as a basis for developing the SEAMAP-SA Database. All the data will be in Microsoft Access, and the data will eventually be web accessible for SEDAR and other partners, and interacting with the IMS database and accessible in Arc Server. The work group has some queries developed that enable users to see length-frequencies, and trends, for the entire time series. The Work Group has also been developing a Data Management Guidance Plan and that is nearly complete. Once the data scheme is established and data uploaded to the system, the group can then start developing GIS products and queries for the web interface. Some new web designs have already been developed as well as a metadata template.

The Crustacean work group did not meet this year but they will meet this coming year in a joint meeting with the Coastal Survey work group. Golden crabs are common in priority habitat areas, but the impacts of the crab fishery and its gear are unevaluated so this will be a topic for the work group's discussion.

During the second and third weeks of June 2008, the North Carolina Fisheries R/V Carolina Coast departed for the fiftieth cruise of the Pamlico Sound Survey. Sampling occurred from the 9th-12th and 17th-19th. Fifty-four stations were randomly selected from seven strata based on depth and geographic location. These strata were Neuse River, Pamlico River, Pungo River, shallow and deep Pamlico Sound east of Bluff Shoal, and shallow and deep Pamlico Sounds west of Bluff Shoal. Seventy-four species of finfish and invertebrates were captured during the cruise. Several of the most abundant species are considered economically important and include spot, Atlantic croaker, blue crab, weakfish, southern flounder, summer flounder, brown shrimp, pink shrimp, and bluefish. Spot and Atlantic croaker dominated the catches throughout the cruise. During the June 2008 cruise, spot (n=73,896) increased 139% compared to the average for the past five June surveys. Atlantic croaker (n=20,002) increased 20%. Weakfish (n=652) decreased 62%. Blue crabs (n=2,355) decreased 34%. Summer flounder (n=765) increased 175%. Southern flounder (n=121) decreased 42%.

For the fall survey, sampling occurred during the 7th-9th and 15th-17th of September 2008. This was the fifty-first cruise. Fifty-four stations were randomly selected using the same method previously stated. Seventy-seven species of finfish and invertebrates were captured during the cruise with spot and Atlantic croaker being the most abundant throughout the sampling period. During the September 2007 cruise, spot (n=51,569) increased 55% compared to the average for the past five September surveys. Atlantic croaker (n=31,063) increased 30%. Weakfish (n=3,077) increased 38%. Blue crabs (n=140) decreased 74%. Summer flounder (n=823) increased 199%. Southern flounder (n=121) decreased 32%.

During June 2009, 54 stations were sampled during 8th-11th and 15th-18th. In September 2009, 54 stations are planned to be sampled during the 14th-17th and 21st-24th.

This year's Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise had the lowest numbers of striped bass in the whole time series with only 147 captured and 146 tagged. The fish were far offshore, some 20 miles off Virginia Beach. A 22-year summary report will be completed this year on the cruise. A dedicated NOAA vessel based in the South Atlantic would be beneficial for this cruise as they have problems securing a vessel every year.

SEAMAP funds helped support the high quality taxonomic identification done at the SERTC, maintaining and expanding a curated collection of the coastal and marine fauna of the South Atlantic. They are concentrating their work on stomach content analysis and deciding on variables to measure. SERTC is a valuable asset to the South Atlantic, and can be for the gulf region as well, and the possibility for SERTC to aid in ichthyoplankton identification will continue to be explored.

Overview of SEAMAP-Caribbean

A. Rosario reported on the following activities:

Virgin Islands

Conch Survey - 2006-2008 - An important fishery exists in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) for queen conch. Conch regulations were revised and went into effect on July 1, 2008 to eliminate overfishing of conch resources, particularly on St. Croix, and to avoid a collapse of the resource. The proactive harvest regulations for the territory were recommended by the Fisheries Advisory Committees. Provisions in the regulations include conch size and meat weight limits, harvest quotas, landing restrictions (50,000 lb annual harvest quota/district), sales restrictions, closed season and reporting requirements.

A study was conducted to assess the abundance of conch within the Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), contiguous to the USVI. A delay in the startup of the conch surveys in St. Thomas/St. John occurred due to the late availability of federal funds, administrative challenges in establishing grant fiscal accounts within the new fiscal system and the inability to obtain contract divers. As a result, conch surveys, which were to be conducted during the closed season (July-October), were conducted during the open harvest season. The Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) conducted a survey of conch fishers in St. Thomas/St. John to identify known commercial harvest locations. Maps were mailed to conch fishers to obtain information on current harvest locations. Two current harvest locations were added to the original 22 survey sites surveyed in 1981 and 2001. Underwater scooter conch surveys were conducted from November 14, 2008 to April 24, 2009. Ten old sites and two new sites were surveyed in St. Thomas. The total survey area of 31,059 square meters (3.1 hectares) yielded 253 conch, 113 adults and 140 juveniles. Conch density ranged from 0-3,706/hectare for adults and 0-1,409/hectare for juveniles. In St. John, 12 old sites were surveyed covering 30,476 square meters (3.0 hectares). A total of 116 conch, 44 adults and 59 juveniles were recorded. Conch densities ranged from 0-182/hectare for adults and 0-311/hectare for juveniles. Data analysis and report preparation are in progress.

Conch surveys were unable to be initiated in St. Croix at the same time as St. Thomas/St. John due to staff shortages and the lack of Division-certified divers. St. Croix conch surveys are scheduled to commence in August during the conch season closure with contract personnel. A total of 22 original sites and an additional eight new sites will be surveyed.

Lobster Survey -- A study was undertaken in the USVI to monitor the annual recruitment of juvenile lobsters in coastal mangrove environs to artificial habitats. A Coastal Zone Management permit was approved in April 2008 for the deployment of lobster habitats in territorial waters of St. Croix and St. Thomas. Additional approval was required for the deployment of lobster habitats in St. Croix in the Salt River National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve, managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Government of the Virgin Islands. Approval from the NPS was received in June 2008. Ten lobster habitats, consisting of two tiers of eight concrete blocks each, were established in the Cas Cay Marine Reserve on the east end of St. Thomas and Salt River Bay in St. Croix in October. Lobster habitats were established in seagrass blowout areas (minimum of 2-3 m water depth) in close proximity to fringing mangroves. Lobster habitats were surveyed monthly from November 2008 to July 2009. Data collection consists of monitoring lobster recruitment (number, size and sex), as well as identifying and enumerating the fish and invertebrates associated with the artificial habitats. A total of 40 juvenile lobsters have been recorded in Salt River habitats during the study period (November-June). No lobster recruitment has been recorded in Cas Cay Marine Reserve habitats. Recruitment appears to be spatially related to the artificial habitat location within the study area. Densities as high as seven juvenile lobsters in one habitat have been recorded on one habitat in Salt River. Thirty-two fish species from 14 families have been recorded associated with the habitats. Juvenile acanthurids (surgeonfish), labrids (wrasses) and lutjanids (snappers) comprise the most dominant fish species. The study is ongoing and will continue until November 2009.

Parrotfish Survey - Parrotfish have become the staple reef fish protein source for Virgin Islanders, especially on St. Croix. A study was initiated in May 2009 to determine the reproductive cycle of stoplight (*Sparisoma viride*), redbtail (*Sparisoma chrysopterygum*) and redbfin (*Sparisoma rubripinne*) parrotfish. Samples of 25 fish of each of the three species are obtained monthly for biostatistical measurements, sex and gonad condition. The stage of gonad maturation is recorded as unknown (Stage 1), resting (Stage 2), developing (Stage 3), ripe (Stage 4) or spent (Stage 5) based on visual inspection. The study is ongoing and will continue for one year until May 2010.

Reef Fish - Handline Survey - Fish trap sampling methodology was deleted from the FY 2008-2011 amended grant documents for the Caribbean, due to the poor catch rates, and the line fishing component was expanded. Due to the delay in allocation of federal funds and subsequent development of accounting codes, the startup of the project was delayed. Sampling is scheduled to begin in August 2009.

Administrative/Staff Issues - Two new additions to the administrative staff of DFW have been announced. Ms. Beulah Dalmida-Smith, a native Virgin Islander and former Commissioner of DPNR, has been appointed as Director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife. Ms. Dalmida-Smith will start on August 3 and will be located in St. Thomas. The Director's position has been vacant

since April 2008. Mr. Jonathan Jed Brown has been appointed as Assistant Director and Chief of Fisheries. He will start in September and be located in St. Croix. The Chief of Fisheries position has been vacant since August 2006. Vacant fisheries positions (two in St. Croix and one in St. Thomas) continue to challenge the ability of the Division to complete projects in a timely manner.

Puerto Rico

Lobster Survey – 2007-2008 - Artificial habitats - Delays on funding approval cascaded down to delays in acquisition of materials and starting dates of the studies, both in the last and present cycle. For that reason, one of the two components of the lobster study was started on January of 2008. Six stations, each with ten artificial habitats for a total of 60 artificial habitats or “casitas,” were deployed on the west coast of Puerto Rico. The stations were monitored monthly since their deployment. In July, a total of 53 lobsters were counted among all the casitas. Most of the lobsters were collected at the Fanduco station (24) during that month. The maximum amount of lobsters in one casita was nine. The maximum lobster size found in a casita has been 2.5 inches carapace length. Octopus immediately inhabited artificial shelters upon deployment and their numbers increased over time. As a natural predator of lobsters, they were removed from the casitas when they were found and relocated to other areas.

Stations were sampled monthly from January 2008 to December 2008. Gaps in data collection were due to water turbidity, which on occasion made it impossible to evaluate the artificial shelters. Total number of juveniles found in a station ranged from 0 to 80. The greatest numbers of juveniles were found at El Negro, Fanduco and Bramadero stations. The size of juveniles found at the artificial shelters ranged from 0.5 inches to three inches.

Larvae Collectors - The second component of the study was started with the deployment of lobster larvae collectors in seven stations. The stations are located in the proximity of seagrass beds on the west coast. Each station consist of two lines, each line has two collectors. One collector was located at five feet from the sea floor and the other at mid-water (usually around 35-40 feet). A total of 28 collectors were deployed at the seven stations. The sampling started in April 2008 and will continue for a year. Most pueruli were observed settling on stations located in deeper water (over 60' depth) in the collector closest to the bottom. The greatest amount of pueruli found in one station was 56. Gaps in monthly data collection were experienced due to the loss of collectors or bad weather. The total number of pueruli found on any particular station ranged from 0 to 103.

No statistical difference was found of the total number of pueruli and juveniles, also found on the collectors, through the year. There were significant differences on overall monthly reports for shallow larval collectors. September and January were the months in which greater numbers of pueruli were observed in the shallow collectors. No significant difference was found for overall monthly reports of deeper spiny lobster collectors. No significant difference was found between the number of pueruli and juveniles observed in shallow versus deep collectors over the year. There was significant intra-station differences of the numbers of total pueruli and juveniles observed.

There was a significant relation between moon phase and total number of pueruli and juvenile settlement. The major abundance of pueruli and juveniles was observed during and after the first five days of the first quarter (almost full moon). There were significant differences between the quantity of pueruli and juveniles observed during those days and those observed close to the third quarter. Transparent pueruli were observed mainly around the first quarter and towards the new moon. Pigmented pueruli followed the pattern observed for general collector catch. Juveniles were observed in greater abundance between the full moon and the third quarter.

A draft of the final survey report is currently under revision. The report will be finished in August 2009. Copies of the report will be sent to all members of the SEAMAP-C Committee and to the NMFS Program Manager and technical reviewers.

Reef Fish Survey – 2008-2009 - The study objective is to expand the reef fish sampling to the east and south coast of Puerto Rico. Reef fish monitoring for the south coast of Puerto Rico was not initiated until the first week of August, since there was a delay in the allocation of funds. Notwithstanding, the contracts to hire the proposed personnel were submitted and approved. Most of the procurement of project materials was finished on time.

The sampling off the west coast was finished in July 2009 (60 fishing trips). All samples were processed and the data is being organized for entry into the new database provided by the SEAMAP Database Manager. Gonad samples were collected and preserved and will be processed in August 2009. East coast sampling (80 trips) will also start in August 2009. East and south coast sampling will continue until all required trips are completed.

Spawning Aggregation Site Monitoring - Surveys of the spawning aggregation sites off the west coast of Puerto Rico were delayed due to procurement issues involving the purchase of the cameras to be used for monitoring the spawning aggregation. The survey will start in December 2009 upon arrival of the cameras.

Yellowtail Snapper Survey Objective - Funds for this next sampling cycle were received in July 2009 and the process of procurement was started. All contracts are in place and the study will be started in August to identify sampling locations. We amend the contracts that were in place to conduct the survey for the sampling period of April 2008 to March 2009. A survey will be conducted with yellowtail snapper fishers to gain insight on the fishing areas and techniques. Based on the survey results, the sampling stations will be selected and the final sampling methodology will be set.

Administrative/Staff Issues - Due to the fiscal situation in Puerto Rico, all government agencies are required to reduce their staff by 40%. The Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER), the agency hosting the SEAMAP program, is in the process of reducing its staff. The Fisheries Research Laboratory has also been impacted by the process. The SEAMAP principal investigator was transferred by the Secretary of DNER to the central offices. They are in the process of reorganizing the SEAMAP projects to maintain grant commitments. Since the SEAMAP is not permitted to contract staff, personnel from other projects will be used for support.

SEAMAP-C UPR/Administrative Report - Administrative Coordination - A total of five SEAMAP-C meetings were coordinated between August 2008 and July 2009. The meetings took place alternately in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to review all programmatic surveys on conch, lobster and reef fish being carried out in the USVI and Puerto Rico.

Outreach Material Production and Dissemination - Two SEAMAP-C posters were coordinated and produced as outreach materials. The color posters, entitled "SEAMAP-C in Puerto Rico" and "SEAMAP-C in the Virgin Islands," summarize the main studies performed by the program in both regions. The posters have been used in several fisheries workshops for fishermen and also as handouts to the general public. Educational brochures on conch, whelk, lobster and reef fish were also produced and used as outreach materials (copies are available for revision).

Acquisition of Reef Fish/EFH Sampling Gear - A SEABOTIX-Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV), which will be used by both the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico SEAMAP-C components, was acquired with the last supplemental funds. SEAMAP-C will expand their surveys during 2009-2011 to verify, describe and characterize spawning aggregation sites previously identified and spatially localized during an extensive interview-based survey. Ojeda, et al., (2007) identified potential spawning sites around Puerto Rico Archipelago, including the islands of Mona, Desecheo, Culebra and Vieques. Initial studies will concentrate on the east coast of Puerto Rico to verify past known spawning aggregation sites and to identify potential new aggregation areas. A total of 27 known past spawning aggregation areas and 93 present "potential" (non-overlapping) spawning aggregation sites were identified using fishers' traditional knowledge testimonies. Of the "potential" spawning aggregation sites, 71 were identified as supporting multiple species spawning throughout the year

Research Coordination - A conch study, "Comparative analysis and GIS mapping of continued SEAMAP-C queen conch (*Strombus gigas*) stock abundance surveys in Puerto Rico," was coordinated and funded by SEAMAP-C coordination. A stock abundance survey of the Puerto Rico queen conch population was undertaken in 2006 and data were successfully plotted and analyzed within a GIS. The findings of this recent survey and geospatial analyses are summarized in this SEAMAP-C report and have been compared to previous stock abundance surveys of the Puerto Rico population. Through comparative analysis and GIS mapping of SEAMAP-C stock abundance survey data, this study attempts to assess the status and shelf-wide distribution of queen conch in Puerto Rico, highlighting changes within the population over a ten year period.

Proposed Activities and budget Needs for FY2010

Each component stated they will continue the same activities in 2010 for the same amount of funding that was received in 2009.

The budget breakdown is as follows and all components agreed this is the correct percentages and amounts.

Component	Percentage		FY2009	FY2010
Gulf	41.3%	40.6%	\$2,068,331	\$2,068,331
Caribbean	10.5%	10.3%	\$525,847	\$525,847
South Atlantic	32.9%	32.4%	\$1,647,653	\$1,647,653
NMFS	15.3%	16.7%	\$848,234	\$848,234
	100.0%	100.0%	\$5,090,065	\$5,090,065

R. Pugliese stated that literally 100% of the NMFS funding was used for the Gulf of Mexico component this past year, funding the Polish Sorting Center (PSC). He said the South-Atlantic component is concerned that this was not discussed prior to using the funds for the PSC. **J. Rester** stated \$80,000 was used for the PSC and **R. Pugliese** stated again, this was not discussed prior to allocating the funds. **L. Desfosse** said that she and the Center Director made the decision to allocate the funds because the PSC increased their costs unexpectedly and NMFS wanted the samples processed for the SEAMAP. She stated the South Atlantic probably did not benefit from this decision but in the future they may have funding shortfalls where NMFS will have to allocate funds to them, specifically. She said these decisions have to be made when priorities shift and she did inform the coordinators when the decision was made.

J. Rester asked the committee if SEAMAP does receive a large increase in funding in the future, will they use the same percentages that were agreed upon 3 years ago. **E. Roche** suggested any increases should be discussed and allocated based on the priorities at that time. **D. Donaldson** said the percentages were based on historical breakdowns and by identifying requirements in each region, so he agrees allocations for any funding increases should be discussed. The Committee agreed.

Update on Permit Requirements

L. Desfosse discussed two data calls from headquarters. She said the data calls impact all entities receiving federal funding. The first data call is for the permitting for marine mammal incidental takes. She said some of the SEAMAP partners have permits for sea turtles and some are in the process of trying to obtain permits for sea turtles. She said as far as she knows, nobody, including NOAA Fisheries has a marine mammal incidental take permit. Therefore, everyone is operating illegally. Because of this there is a national effort to put an umbrella permit in place that will cover not only the federal surveys but also state and university surveys. This data call is the first step to compile the information that will be used to implement this permit. She does not know how long it will take to get the permit in place.

The second data call is for a compilation of information on fishery independent data. Headquarters is compiling metadata that will be linked with metadata on fishery dependent programs, becoming a central database housed at headquarters. This will also apply to the states as well as federal programs.

L. Desfosse said that on June 25, 2009 Steve Murawski distributed a memo that sets new NMFS policy on how to operate in terms of incidental takes, until the permit is in place. First, the agency needs to conduct a review of all sampling programs and submit the information before August 15, 2009. The federal data has been compiled, now the states need to compile theirs. She reviewed the template the states need to submit. Secondly, if there is an incidental take it has to be reported to the science center director within two working days.

L. Desfosse said both steps are extremely important because everybody is operating without a permit. If the incidental takes are not reported, or if there are too many, some of the surveys could be shut down. The Office of Protective Resources is allowing the surveys to continue without a permit but the requirements are becoming more stringent. **L. Desfosse** said there is also a mitigation section for programs in place that have historical incidental takes. Through this review process the office of science and technology will decide if any of the surveys have high historical takes and if so, they may recommend redesigning the sampling process. She asked the members to try to reduce potential severity of takes and if there is an area where there have been historical takes, stay out of that area.

L. Desfosse reviewed the reporting format and stated there will be an annual review from headquarters on all incidental takes and they may recommend mitigation programs on any of the surveys that have or will potentially have high takes. She then went through the templates to show the members the information needed. J. Rester will distribute the templates to the members and coordinators.

L. Desfosse distributed the user's guide on reporting all fishery independent data collected and stated they are trying to centralize all of the information and provide online access. She said this information has to be provided before August 31, 2009 and Mark McDuff is the contact person. They will provide the template to report and if there are any questions contact him. She then reviewed the information needed on the template.

SEAMAP Strategic Planning Issues

L. Desfosse asked the Committee to consider strategic planning issues when updating the next Five Year Management Plan. One issue that needs to be discussed is standardization in surveys. Make sure the data collected on the federal side can be integrated with the data collected on the state side. She said NMFS will have to start collecting a broader array of data with the move to ecosystem management and SEAMAP should be a part of this. The Committee should also discuss the gap in sampling especially in the South Atlantic as they start closing fisheries. She said NMFS changed the survey design for trawl surveys and they need to discuss how to maintain consistency, standardization, and integration of data for any future survey design changes. J. Carmichael and J. Waters from the Southeast Science Center can make suggestions on how SEAMAP can be modified to fill in the gaps or make changes to survey designs.

R. Pugliese stated he wanted to acknowledge all of the work that went into the last plan. He said they did consider what needed to be done in the future and they reviewed SEDAR needs and high priority management. He feels the last effort began the process of expansion of SEAMAP. The Committee agreed it is time to identify how SEAMAP can move toward ecosystem based

management, and start to refine high priority management information needs within all partners, and research priority needs and long term efforts. **L. Desfosse** suggested each component compile information on all of their surveys such as how they are being done, how the information is being used in assessment management, just do a full inventory as an initial step.

D. Donaldson suggested setting a deadline for each component to compile this information. **R. Pugliese** suggested all of the chairs and coordinators discuss this when they get back to the office and set a timeframe instead of having an open forum at this time. The Committee agreed and L. Desfosse and T. Henwood will be included in the discussion.

Planning for the 2010 Joint Annual Meeting

A. Rosario said the USVI Commissioner would like to host the 2010 Joint Annual SEAMAP meeting in St. Croix. She said arrangements are pending with the Buccaneer Hotel and they will plan for the same time frame (first or second week in August) as in the past. The Committee graciously accepted the invitation.

Other Business

E. Roche said Kelly Donnelly apologizes for not being able to attend but she has an updated listing of the supplemental funds balance and asks that it be used before the expiration date.

With there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:23 p.m.

**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES
August 4, 2009
Charleston, SC**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Call to Order

Chairman **J. Hanifen** called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members:

Jim Hanifen, *Chairman*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Bob McMichael, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Read Hendon, USM/CMS/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX

Others:

Terry Henwood, *SEAMAP Program Manager*, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Karen Mitchell, *SEAMAP Technical Monitor*, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Lisa Desfosse, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Richard Waller, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
John Walter, NMFS, Miami, FL
John Carmichael, SAFMC, Charleston, SC

Staff:

Dave Donaldson, *Assistant 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

Desfosse
L. ~~Kline~~ will discuss SEAMAP strategic planning under other business if time allows. R. Hendon moved to adopt the agenda with this addition. B. McMichael seconded and the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

J. Hanifen asked to add "LDWF" to M. Fisher, S. Delaune, and R. Boothe's names under Other Attendees. R. Hendon moved to approve the minutes with changes. J. Mareska seconded and the motion passed.

Administrative Report

J. Rester reported the Commission hired an intern this past summer and part of her responsibilities were to collect a list of all published reports and papers that used SEAMAP data. So far she has found between 150-200 papers and she downloaded the papers into PDF format.

J. Rester said he still needs cruise reports for all SEAMAP related surveys within 60 days of the survey completion. The real-time data was distributed via email. There are only 25 recipients on the snail mail listing. He asked the Subcommittee to delete the old real time programs.

J. Rester said the Commission accepted the Subcommittee's motion to send a letter to NMFS requesting expedited reviewing and processing of exemption letters for turtle interaction during SEAMAP cruises. He said he did not write the letter because he was lead to believe that after the March meeting that the exemption letters were eminent. **K. Mitchell** said it may be a while before the exemption letters are received and **L. Kline** said a letter from the Commission is not necessary because this is a priority for NMFS because all of the regions need the exemption letters. She will discuss this further at the joint meeting.

Desfossé

Status of FY2010 Budget

J. Rester said SEAMAP should receive \$5.121 million for FY2010 minus assessments and taxes. The Senate and House marks are the same as the President's budget so that usually means the amount will not change. **K. Mitchell** said there is a considerable amount left in the SEAMAP supplemental funds and if it is not spent by the end date for each applicant's grant, the funds will go back into the treasury. Because they are supplemental funds there will not be any no cost extensions. Following is a breakdown of the supplemental funds received and what was has been spent:

<u>State</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Balance as of 5/21</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>End Date</u>
Alabama	\$154,052	\$111,973	73%	9/30/2010
Florida	\$402,079	\$317,832	79%	1/31/2011
GSMFC	\$132,763	\$78,779	59%	6/30/2011
Louisiana	\$638,519	\$408,346	64%	6/30/2010
Mississippi	\$376,490	\$218,142	58%	6/30/2010
Texas	\$184,422	\$149,146	81%	1/31/2011

K. Mitchell will have the remaining balances at the October meeting and the Subcommittee should report on when and how the funds will be used.

Florida – B. McMichael reported they just finished a cruise and most of the supplemental funds were used for that. Another cruise is scheduled for October and that should expend the supplemental funds. They will continue the trawling survey, the camera survey and managing the ichthyoplankton archiving center with the same funding as 2009.

Mississippi – R. Hendon reported the supplemental funds are being used for the longlining and the winter and spring plankton surveys. He said Mississippi will continue the same surveys in 2010 for the same amount of funding.

Alabama – J. Mareska reported the supplemental funds are being used for the bongo sampling. He said Alabama's ichthyoplankton stations are not SEAMAP stations and they are considering modifying that so there will be some costs involved. They have negotiated with DISL to do the longline survey in Alabama waters. The groundfish cruises and inshore sampling will continue. Alabama requests \$210,000 for 2010.

Louisiana – J. Hanifen reported they will continue the seasonal cruises for the same amount of funding. The supplemental funds will be used for updating their end of the data management system to get away from the dBase program and to do bottom type assessments in Mississippi, Breton and Chandeleur Sounds. They should receive bids on the RFP for the bottom type assessments soon and they are expecting to spend \$350-\$400K of the supplemental funds.

Texas – F. Martinez reported Texas plans to continue the same sampling efforts for the same budget. Longline wenchers were purchased with supplemental funds.

GSMFC – J. Rester reported the 2010 budget will remain the same. They will be responsible for meetings, data management and the coordination of the program. He asked B. McMichael if Florida needs funds to purchase a ship board electronic data capture system for the new vessel (WeatherBird). **B. McMichael** said yes, approximately \$30,000. **D. Waller** asked L. Kline the status of NMFS developing a new electronic board. She said it was contracted but they had problems. She will check the status and inform the Subcommittee.

NMFS – T. Henwood reported there have been increases in costs for the Polish Sorting Center (PSC) and the rest of the budget will be used for data management and the cruises. He said the PSC is in transition as workers are retiring they need to hire and train new people. It is a possibility they may not continue sorting in the future. The Atlantic states, Mississippi and DISL are interested in processing some of the samples and NMFS is not opposed to that. They do not think one place can handle all of the regions' samples so it may have to be done regionally. The Subcommittee feels they should start transitioning to this or have a plan in place before the PSC pulls out. The current contract expires October 2010 and is renewed on a yearly basis. **T. Henwood** will ask J. Shultz to set up a meeting with the groups that are interested in developing a plan and report back to the Subcommittee. NMFS is requesting \$848,234 for FY2010.

The FY2010 budget breakdown is:

Gulf	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010
Alabama	\$195,000	\$195,000	\$210,000
Florida	\$425,000	\$530,000	\$559,421
GSMFC	\$227,327	\$259,474	\$259,474
Louisiana	\$447,420	\$447,420	\$447,420
Mississippi/USM	\$380,000	\$469,681	\$454,681

Texas	\$137,335	\$166,756	\$137,335
TOTAL	\$1,812,082	\$2,068,331	\$2,068,331
NMFS	\$766,234	\$848,234	\$848,234

30 Minute Tow Time Review

T. Henwood gave an overview on the methodology of the 30 minute tow times. He said NMFS has changed to completely randomized survey designs. The stations will be proportionally allocated by surface area which will cover the concerns on depth considerations, geographical areas, spatial considerations, day/night trawling, etc. He said the old methodology was stratified random sampling. The 30 minute tow time will increase the number of samples.

J. Rester said at the March meeting the Subcommittee decided to send the methodology out for review to make sure using the data collected with the new methodology would be comparable to the data already in the database. He said he did not receive a report to distribute. **T. Henwood** said NMFS has started using the 30 minute tow times and does not plan to change. All of the other regions use the 30 minute tow times. He said the historical data can be post stratified to make it comparable to the new data.

J. Rester asked the Subcommittee if the states should change to the 30 minute tow times so they will be standardized. **J. Hanifen** asked T. Henwood to give J. Rester his power point presentation that he just showed to the Subcommittee along with the design/methodology, and J. Rester will send it out for review. **J. Hanifen** said this should be further discussed and a decision should be made at the October meeting.

SEAMAP Data Management

J. Rester reported that Lloyd Kirk has been working on developing programs to automate and validate importation of the user supply data; implementing automatic verification and a validation method of existing SEAMAP data; removing non-SEAMAP data from the SEAMAP database (not deleting the data completely); fulfilling user data requests in a timely manner; designing and developing an Oracle Discoverer Interface; and developing custom data plotting/reports of end user internet queries. He said the members are getting the data to him in a timely manner.

Review of the 2003 SEAMAP Atlas

J. Rester reported the 2003 Atlas is complete and was sent out for review. He asked if anyone had changes to get them in as soon as possible. The 2004 Atlas should be completed next week and will be sent out for review. He asked how the scientific name changes should be handled in the SEAMAP database. The Subcommittee said that when AFS changes the name, it should be changed in the database. **J. Hanifen** said the Subcommittee needs to think about doing an interactive digital atlas. The Subcommittee agreed to complete the pending atlases before planning a new atlas format.

Need for October Meeting

J. Rester reminded the Subcommittee they had discussed in March the possibility of not having the October meeting in order to save time and money. **The Subcommittee** decided there were sufficient agenda items to have a meeting this October but will only have the August or October meeting on an as needed basis. They will decide from year to year. **E. Roche** said from a grants perspective, the August meeting is very beneficial because they can meet with all of the components.

Other Business

L. Kline ^{DeStefano} said she will be discussing strategic planning and some issues of concern with SEAMAP at the joint meeting. The 5 year management plan will be updated next year so this should be a good time to do this. One of the issues that needed to be discussed is standardization in surveys. She said they will have to start collecting a broader array of data with the move to ecosystem management and SEAMAP should be a part of this. They also need to discuss the gap in sampling especially in the South Atlantic as they start closing fisheries. The Subcommittee decided each state should give detailed presentations of their programs and how it fits in the strategic planning process at the next joint meeting.

J. Walter informed the Subcommittee of new developments with SEDAR. He said there was a workshop on CPU indices which produced a report and it is currently in final draft form. It will include a check list or report card showing the criteria needed for data to be used in stock assessments. It will also show how the indices and which indices were used in recent assessments.

J. Hanifen asked J. Walter to give a presentation in October on the Gulf surveys and the stock assessment process. He said he will and the SEDAR Coordinators can also give a presentation on which data has been used through all the SEDARs to date. He also asked that Julie Neer and Dale Thieling, the SEDAR Coordinators, be included in all SEAMAP correspondence concerning this issue. **D. Donaldson** said FIN used the recommendations documents from SEDAR and suggested SEAMAP review them as well. The Subcommittee agreed to use the recommendations documents as guidance.

E. Roche said the competitive programs (MARFIN, CRP, and SK) are now on their web page.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:21.

SEAMAP JOINT MINUTES

Ft. Myers, FL
August 12, 2008

APPROVED BY:
Rich Rosario 8/11/09
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman Roger Pugliese called the meeting to order at 1:13 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members:

James Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
John Mareska (proxy for Steve Heath), ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Katy West, NCDMF, Washington, NC
Elizabeth Wenner, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Roger Pugliese, SAFMC, Charleston, SC
William Tobias, VIDPNR-DFW, Frederikstead, St. Croix USVI
Aida Rosario, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR
Tina Udouj, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Richard Waller, USM/COST/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Butch Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Bob McMichael, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Patrick Geer, GADNR, Brunswick, GA

Others:

Ellie F. Roche, NOAA/NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
André Dubose, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Kim Williams, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Read Hendon, USM/COST/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Henry Norris, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Jeanne Boylan, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Larry DeLancey, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Nilda Jiménez, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR

Staff:

Terry Henwood, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS
Kelly Donnelly, NOAA/NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Karen Mitchell, NOAA/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

B. Pellegrin asked to delete Item 4d, the NMFS report. He said NMFS is not a partner as the other components are and he will present all information in Item 5. The agenda was adopted with this change.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from August 2-3, 2007 were approved as submitted.

Overview of SEAMAP-Caribbean

A. Rosario reported the Caribbean has been very busy after receiving their vessel this past year. They were able to finish all of the surveys that were delayed until the procurement of the new vessel.

The Virgin Islands Reef Fish Trap and Line Study and the Supplemental Line Surveys were completed April 1, 2007 through March 31, 2008. The Trap and Line Study used baited fish traps and baited handlines to sample reef fish and to obtain information on relative fish abundance and species composition in St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix. Twenty trips were made in St. Thomas/St. John (eight additional trips) and eight trips in St. Croix, based on depth strata. The Supplemental Line Study compared anchor fishing to drift fishing in St. Thomas/St. John in an effort to determine any differences in catch rate and fish species composition. Sampling areas were adjusted to compensate for the area and depth strata lost to the expansion of federal waters of the Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument in St. John, and the Buck Island Reef National Monument in St. Croix. The final report was prepared in April 2008.

An extension was received to complete the conch assessment survey. The extension was requested due to the loss of Division personnel and lack of a vessel from which to conduct the research. The purpose of the study is to assess the conch populations around St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix at previously sampled randomized sites. As mentioned previously, a new research vessel was purchased and additional personnel have been contracted to participate in field surveys. A recent revision of the conch regulations extends the annual conch season closure from June 1 through October 31. The conch survey will be conducted during the months of August, September, and October 2008.

Permit applications have been submitted to the Department of Planning and Natural Resources and the National Park Service to conduct the lobster survey in the Salt River Bay Historical Park and Ecological Preserve, a joint territorial and federal park on St. Croix. An active permit exists to conduct the study in the Cas Cay/Benner Bay Mangrove Lagoon Marine Reserve in St. Thomas. The purpose of the study is to monitor juvenile lobster recruitment to lobster habitats (casitas) constructed from concrete blocks in seagrass areas adjacent to coastal mangrove habitats. Sites for casitas have been identified and materials have been procured on St. Croix. Lobster habitats will be immediately deployed upon receipt of permits. Pre-existing sites in St. Thomas have been located and require excavation and reconstruction. Procurement of materials has been initiated.

The lobster study in Puerto Rico was delayed due to funding approval which in turn delayed acquisition of materials and the starting dates for the last and present cycle. One of the two components of the lobster study was started in January 2008. Six stations, each with ten artificial habitats, for a total of 60 artificial habitats or "casitas," were deployed on the west coast of Puerto Rico and have been monitored monthly. There seems to be a peak of recruitment towards the months of June and July. In July, a total of 53 lobsters were counted among all the casitas with the Fanduco station collecting most of the lobsters (24 lobsters) during that month. The

maximum number of lobsters in one casita was nine. The maximum lobster size found in a casita was 2.5 inches carapace length. Octopuses, a natural predator of lobsters, are being removed from the casitas as they are found and relocated to areas far away from the casitas.

The second component of the study was started in March with the deployment of lobster collectors at seven stations. The stations are located in the proximity of seagrass beds on the west coast. Each station consist of two lines, each line has two collectors. One collector is located at five feet from the sea floor and the other at mid-water (usually around 35-40 feet) for a total of 28 collectors. The sampling started in April and will continue for a year. Most pueruli have settled on the stations located in deeper water (over 60' depth) in the collector closest to the bottom. The highest number of pueruli found in one station was 56.

The reef fish monitoring has not been initiated because funds were not available until last week (first week of August). Notwithstanding, the contracts to hire the proposed personnel were submitted. These contracts have been approved by the Legal Division, which should speed up the process. They are currently in the process of procuring project materials. As soon as the contracts are signed and the materials received, the study will start. The study objective is to expand the reef fish sampling to the east and south coast of Puerto Rico.

Overview of SEAMAP-Gulf

J. Hanifen reported the Fall Plankton cruise took place from August 28 through September 29, 2007. NMFS sampled 144 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 9 to December 7, 2007, from off Mobile, Alabama to the U.S.-Mexican border. Vessels sampled waters out to 60 fm with trawls and plankton nets in addition to environmental sampling. The objectives of the survey were to sample the northern Gulf of Mexico to determine abundance and distribution of demersal organisms from inshore waters to 60 fm, obtain length-frequency measurements for major finfish and shrimp species to determine population size structures, collect environmental data to investigate potential relationships between abundance and distribution of organisms and environmental parameters, and collect ichthyoplankton samples to determine relative abundance and distribution of eggs and larvae of commercially and recreationally important fish species.

A new SEAMAP longlining survey began in 2007 to monitor coastal shark populations in the near shore waters of the north central Gulf of Mexico. This nearshore shark survey will complement 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 also to collect environmental data. During 2007,

Mississippi sampled seven stations during September and three stations during October, 2007. In 2008, the survey began monthly sampling in March that will continue until October.

The SEAMAP Winter Plankton Survey took place from February 7 to March 17, 2008. Ichthyoplankton samples were collected at 171 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 17 to May 29, 2008. Ichthyoplankton samples were collected at 157 stations. 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 primary purpose of the Reefish Survey is to assess relative abundance and compute population estimates of reef fishes found on natural reef fish habitat in the Gulf of Mexico. NMFS conducted reefish sampling with fish traps and video cameras from April 17 to May 29, 2008 on the OREGON II. Approximately 220 stations were sampled.

The SEAMAP Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey was conducted from May 31 to July 16, 2008. This was the twenty-seventh 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.

Overview of SEAMAP-South Atlantic

R. Pugliese reported the Coastal Survey, formerly the trawl survey, was the largest component of the SEAMAP-SA. Fifty-one stations were sampled and 59 invertebrate finfish species were identified. The September 2007 surveys sampled 54 stations and 72 species were inland. They plan to sample 54 stations September 8-12 and September 15-19, 2008. 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. He said now that the SA has full funding for the survey, they are able to examine gut contents and institute life histories.

The Bottom Mapping Fish Habitat Characterization Component of the South Atlantic SEAMAP program continues. He said as part of that specific program the MARMAP sample area was expanded to capture reef fish species as well as include an inshore survey. It is in the process of being designed and will be implemented as the resources come online and it will be integrated into the system. The objective of the project is to synthesize data on habitat distributions for water depths between 200 and 2000 m within the U.S. EEZ extending just south of the Virginia/North Carolina border to the Florida Keys. The deepwater GIS will prove to be critical for regional management decisions related to identification, description, and conservation of unique habitats, including deepwater coral communities and EFH, designation of MPAs, recovery of over-exploited fisheries, locating appropriate cable routes, and exploration for mineral and hydrocarbon resources. The expected user groups for this information are state natural resources and commerce agencies, federal agencies, university scientists, and private industry.

The Pamlico Sound Survey was again conducted last year. The 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.

The winter tagging cruise was conducted in January 2008 and this was the twenty-first year for the cruise. They tagged adult striped bass overwintering in the area between False Cape, Virginia and Cape Lookout, North Carolina for assessment of the population structure and exploitation rates. Other species were tagged also. 1,033 striped bass were tagged, as were 8 horseshoe crabs and 73 Atlantic sturgeons. The tagged Atlantic striped bass were below the long-term average. R. Pugliese stated there is a potential for losing the vessel for this cruise and will discuss this further under proposed budget needs.

Status of FY2009 Funds

T. Henwood reported because it is an election year, he expects a continuing resolution. **E. Roche** stated the Senate mark was \$5.098 million last year but the actual omnibus was \$4.392 million minus the Hollings Scholarship so that brought it down to \$4,387,608. She said at this time, the Senate mark is the same as last year. **T. Henwood** said there are no guarantees but he does not expect the Senate mark to change. **E. Roche** said no grants can be processed until they receive a budget.

Proposed Activities and Budget Needs for FY 2009

A. Rosario stated as mentioned before the Caribbean will continue operation of the projects discussed in her Chairman's report for the same amount of funding.

J. Hanifen stated the Gulf plans to maintain the core projects and to work into the expanded programs that were proposed with both the supplemental funds and the increased core funding.

R. Pugliese stated the South Atlantic will also continue current and expanded activities at the current funding level. He said a presentation on SERTC is the next agenda item and they will propose that the Gulf split the funding for this program as it will be useful to both regions. He said they also request that if funding is available in the future, to possibly dedicate it to SEAMAP-SA to go towards purchasing a new vessel.

E. Roche stated the percentages agreed upon need to be confirmed by the SEAMAP Program Manager and be part of the official minutes. The Gulf will receive 41.3% of the base budget amount; the Caribbean will receive 10.5%, the South Atlantic will receive 32.9%, and NMFS 15.3%. **T. Henwood**, SEAMAP Program Manager, confirmed these are the percentages each component will receive.

Update on SERTC (Southeast Regional Taxonomic Center)

B. Wenner gave a presentation on the Southeastern Regional Taxonomic Center. The Center is housed at the Marine Resources Research Institute, SCDNR, but it is a regional center and collaborates with the Gulf of Mexico. Operation began in 2002 with funding administered by NMFS. The primary goal of SERTC is to serve as a focused regional taxonomic resource for individuals and institutions interested in faunal identification and biodiversity of marine and estuarine environments of the southeastern United States. There is a need for having a taxonomic resource in the region because there is a serious lack of trained taxonomists with knowledge about marine biodiversity of the South Atlantic Bight and Gulf of Mexico Regions and the continuing decline in taxonomists threatens the ability to comprehend marine biodiversity and its role in supporting regional fisheries. Without properly trained taxonomists potential problems are not being able to identify organisms for environmental reports, ecological studies, genetic investigations, etc. and they may be unreliable due to poor species identifications; the potential impacts to marine habitats from human activities are not caught because habitat diversity is unknown and indicators are missed; and invasive species arrive and are able to become established and disperse because they are misidentified or remain undetected.

SERTC would be a valuable asset to SEAMAP programs because it would apply high quality taxonomy in support of a variety of endeavors including identification of nekton, ichthyoplankton, feeding habit and age/growth studies. SERTC would also provide taxonomic training opportunities such as workshops and mentoring students and will provide information about invasive and nonindigenous species for the region so the general public will recognize these. SERTC has also published a description of new species. SERTC has compiled a large

regional voucher collection of marine invertebrate specimens and also has access to the College of Charleston Fish Museum and the Ichthyoplankton collection. They have electronically cataloged a collection of specimens and transferred cataloged data to the OBIS georeferenced global faunal database. They are proposing these data to also be exported and incorporated into the SEAMAP database. SERTC has a regionally focused, electronically searchable taxonomic library available and that will also be a great help for people that are interested in assistance with identifying species from their area. They have printed and produced a number of identification guides to regional fauna (including checklists of species, illustrated keys, distributional information, new species, etc.) and have printed web-based regional guides to jellyfish, octocorals, echinoderms, and chaetognaths. They are currently finishing a guide to salt marsh fauna in the southeastern U.S. and one on beach species found while beach combing. They produced educational material such as posters, fact sheets, web pages and press releases on marine invertebrates.

She recognized the collaborators and stated that SERTC would be a valuable asset to SEAMAP in both regions and for a very modest investment of \$150K annually would provide a variety of high quality taxonomic and other services. With that funding SERTC would be able to hire 1 Ph.D. level taxonomist, 1 M.S. level biologist and purchase supplies and other support.

R. Pugliese said at the South Atlantic meeting they discussed the importance of the SERTC and decided to ask if this should be under the umbrella of SEAMAP for all of the components to utilize. **J. Hanifen** said the Gulf component also discussed the activities of SERTC and agree there is a need for them but are not ready to make a decision today if it should be under SEAMAP. **R. Pugliese** said this resource is too valuable and the South Atlantic will try to use SEAMAP funds to help fund the SERTC. **B. Wenner** said the different regions contract out the identification of their samples to private contractors and the Center costs would be cheaper. **A. Rosario** suggested they contact D. Donaldson with GSMFC who is involved in the FIN. This venture may be more appropriate for that program. Other funding sources were suggested and **B. Wenner** stated they have looked at other avenues. She said there are no other centers like this in the southeast that can process a large number of samples. **K. Williams** stated the Gulf of Mexico takes three samples at 600 stations and asked if they could process that amount of samples. **B. Wenner** said she does not think they can but may be able to with additional personnel. **K. Williams** stated if the Gulf of Mexico sends their samples to the center, the other regions' samples would have to be sent their also because with the possibility of the Polish Sorting Center closing, the regions decided to negotiate together. **J. Hanifen** asked how much does it cost to process one sample and **B. Wenner** said approximately \$50.00/sample. **J. Hanifen** suggested K. Williams and B. Wenner discuss this further and K. Williams will pass the information on to J. Shultz.

Planning for 2009 Joint Annual Meeting

R. Pugliese suggested the Joint Annual Meeting be in the first week of August 2009 and the Committee agreed. He said they will check the prices of hotels in the Charleston and St. Augustine areas and will contact the other coordinators at the beginning of 2009. He thanked the

Gulf for hosting this meeting.

Other Business

K. Mitchell said she is researching the possibility of applying for program-wide permits for SEAMAP. The permits will include but are not limited to TED exemptions, turtle interaction, HMS, and Marine Mammals. She asked that each state send her information on the permits they need and currently have for their sampling and she will continue pursuing this.

E. Roche said K. Mitchell is the SEAMAP Technical Monitor and she has the final approval on all proposals before Kelly Donnelly can send them to NOAA grants. She asked each state to keep K. Mitchell in the loop on anything to do with SEAMAP and this will help expedite processing the grants. **E. Roche** said they will be requesting proposals earlier this year so if K. Mitchell has any questions or concerns they will be worked out before they reach K. Donnelly. **K. Mitchell** asked that the budget figures be more specific. She said it does not need to be to the exact penny but feels the amounts can be more specific.

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**ARENARIUS TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
MINUTES
August 12-14, 2009
New Orleans, Louisiana**

The Arenarius Technical Task Force (TTF) was called to order on Tuesday, August 12, 2009, at 1:00 p.m. at The "W" Hotel, New Orleans, LA. Attendance was as follows:

Members Attending

Chuck Adams, UF, Gainesville, FL
John Mareska, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Denise Kinsey, LDWF, Borg, LA
Erick Porche, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jessica McCawley, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Brenda Bowling, TPWD, Dickenson, TX
Ron Mezich, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Jack Isaacs, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Staff

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

Chairman Adams opened the meeting by asking each participant to introduce themselves and welcomed our newest member, **John Mareska**, ADMR. The task force is made up of a scientific representative from each Gulf State (**Mareska, Porche, Kinsey, McCawley, and Bowling**); a recreational fishery representative (TBD); a commercial fishery representative (TBD); an economist (**Adams**); a habitat representative (**Mezich**); and a law enforcement representative (**Chataginer**).

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed by the TTF members. **Mareska** made the motion to accept the agenda as written; it was seconded by **McCawley** and passed unanimously.

Minutes

The minutes from the November 17-18, 2008, meeting in Ft. Myers, FL were approved. The motion to accept the minutes was made by **Kinsey**; it was seconded by **McCawley** and passed unanimously.

Assignment Updates

Section 1.0 Summary and Section 2.0 Introduction – **VanderKooy** briefly reviewed these sections and stated that they will be primarily boilerplate. The summary will be completed once the rest of the document is complete.

Section 3.0 Description of Stock through Section 3.2.1.2.4 Adults - Bowling presented her third draft of the following sections: geography, classification, eggs, larvae, juveniles and adults. **Bowling** reported that she added silver seatrout and explained the differences between the two. Very little information is available on larvae for the silver seatrout. TTF members then reviewed and made comments and formatting changes. **Mareksa** reported that SEAMAP sees a lot of *Arenarius* during their spring sampling.

Section 3.2.2 Age and Growth – Mareksa discussed how he plans to attack the Age and Growth section that he inherited from Mark Van Hoose, who retired from ADMR. **Mareksa** asked that the state representatives send him any data that they have on age and growth. **Porche** offered to talk to Read Hendon at GCRL to see if Tut Warren had any data.

Section 3.2.3 Reproduction through Section 3.2.3.5 Larval Transport – Kinsey presented her third draft of the reproduction section, which included: gonadal development, spawning, fecundity, incubation and larval transport. **Kinsey** reported that she made a few minor updates in the last couple of days and the TTF members reviewed and commented on this section.

Section 3.2.4 Genetics – McCawley presented and the TTF members reviewed the genetics section and there was some discussion on the Ginsburg 1929 reference. Some minor editing was done.

Section 3.2.5 Migration and Movements, Section 3.2.6 Parasites and Diseases and Section 3.2.7 Prey-Predators Relationships – Porche presented the first draft of primarily the feeding section. TTF members then reviewed and edited this section.

Section 4.0 Description of Habitat of the Stock(s) through Section 4.9.4.12 LNG Plants – Mezich reported that he did not have a new draft for TTF members to review and that he is looking for any data on hypoxia. **McCawley** will locate the Florida paper on the 2005 red tide event that had an effect on sand seatrout and will send it to **Mezich**. **Mezich** reported that the mercury count is high in sand seatrout and it is on Florida's list of fish to be only eaten once a week. **Mezich** found when researching the tropical weather and storm effects section that hurricane Charlie had very little effect on sand seatrout.

Section 5.0 Fishery Management Jurisdictions, Laws, and Policies Affecting the Stock(s) through 5.3.2.1 Development of Management Plans (Title II, Section 308(c)) - VanderKooy reviewed this section with TTF members. The state by state sections have been submitted by the LEC members, but they will need to be reviewed by the TTF state representatives for accuracy. Please download your states section, update it and repost it. Once it is updated, let **VanderKooy** know when you are ready to have it reviewed by the task force. Historical changes to the regulations are an important and key section.

Section 6.0 Description of Fishing Activities Affecting the Stock(s) in the United States through Section 6.2.2.5 Texas - McCawley reviewed and explained the section to the TTF members. A sentence will need to be added to note that the data may not be 100% accurate because of misidentification in the MRFSS program. Seatrout is a very opportunistic fishery, due to their abundance and availability. TTF members discussed Table 6.2 – Sand Seatrout

records in the Gulf of Mexico; in particular the Louisiana state record of 11 lbs., which cannot be correct. **Kinsey** offered to research this and report back to **McCawley**. **VanderKooy** stated that he would like all the landings tables to include 2008 data. The TTF state representatives need to forward their landings data to **McCawley**. **McCawley** has provided various sample tables for the state representatives to use to create their state-by-state specific sections.

VanderKooy will ask Gregg Bray to research the MRIP data to complete this section. **Adams** will send **VanderKooy** an email with the exact request of the MRIP data he is looking for.

It was suggested fishing magazines, periodicals, new articles and fishing rodeos and tournaments also may be a good research tool for some of the data needed to complete this section.

Section 7.0 Economic Characteristics of the Commercial and Recreational Fisheries – Adams presented his first draft of the economic section. TTF members reviewed and commented. **Bowling** will provide average monthly data to **Adams** to include in the tables. The question was raised why Mississippi's prices so volatile in the dockside value section, this may need to be investigated further. **VanderKooy** asked if the tables were all sand seatrout or were they a mixture of both sand and silver seatrout; **Adams** responded they were a mixture of both. TTF members discussed at length and agreed that a sentence needs to be added at the beginning of this section with a disclaimer to read something like:

“Seatrout, Sand”, in the NMFS reported landings data represents a two-species mix of sand and silver seatrout, they are not functionally separated. For the purposes of this discussion, sand seatrout will refer to this species group.

This sentence will be used throughout the document to clarify the species data.

A motion was made to use only NMFS reported commercial landings and values data rather than individual state data for the annual landings. **Adams** made the motion; it was seconded by **McCawley** and passed unanimously.

After some discussion, it was agreed that **Adams** will redo Table 7.5.

Very little is known or written about the Processing and Marketing of sand seatrout. They do not show up in fish houses, because they are a low end fish. **Porche** offered call around and see what he can dig up. **Mareska** suggested that possibly the tip agents could fill out a market survey form when they are at the fish houses/processors. **VanderKooy** suggested using the Sheepshead market survey form pared down with questions generated from both **Adams** and **Isaacs**. **Adams** and **Isaacs** are to create the market survey form.

Adams is looking for any consumption studies to complete section 7.1.6.3.

Section 8.0 Social and Cultural Framework of Domestic Fishermen and Their Communities

Isaacs presented his first draft of this section and since the morning discussion he plans to rewrite and revamp a good bit of the finfish landings section in five-year increments dating back

to 1969. **Isaacs** expressed his concern about his species groupings like mullet and sharks. It was discussed and group agreed, but red snapper will have to be in its own category. **VanderKooy** suggested using the Impact Assessment Inc. survey findings before and after Katrina; **VanderKooy** to send **Isaacs** a copy of these findings. It was suggested that the harvest and landings data used in section 6.0 could also be used in this section.

Section 9.0 Regional Research Needs and Requirements – **VanderKooy** indicated that these are placeholders out of the Sheepshead FMP, and a lot of these will apply to the sand seatrout. These will be issues that need to be looked at more closely. This section will be drafted once the rest of the Profile is written.

Technical Task Force Membership

VanderKooy asked TTF members for suggestions to fill the Recreational and Commercial openings. **McCawley** thought she might a possible candidate for the recreational position; she will contact him to see if he is interested in becoming a member of the task force.

Review of Arenarius Website

VanderKooy demonstrated for **Mareska** how to use the Arenarius Technical Task Force Website <http://arenarius.gsmfc.org>. The home page on the website consists of the following sections: home, calendar, document repository, forum, and contact us. **It is very important that you download documents to your computers hard drive before you make any comments, send your comments directly to the author or to VanderKooy and he will forward it to the author for you.** Please post your documents (Word, PDF, or Excel files) as you complete them and feel free to contact **VanderKooy** if you have any questions or problems using the website. **VanderKooy** then showed TTF members how to upload draft documents to the website by clicking on the document repository. Look in the document store column (left), click on the name of the folder you want to deposit the document, look in the documents column (right) click on the upload documents icon. Complete all the information in the document repository screen, and then click on the upload icon. The intention is to have the individual authors post up their drafts for everyone to review, when you go to the website download the document and save it to your hard drive, print it on paper, do not edit it electronically and repost it, if you want to edit it electronically, provide a paragraph for the author, take the electronic copy that you put on your hard drive make the changes and email it to the author. Let the author make the changes and upload the most current version to the website. **Please do not re-upload other people's documents.**

Next Meeting

VanderKooy indicated that the timeline for completion of this Profile is a final draft by the end of this year. If funding is the same as this year and we are not able to have any meeting until mid- year, we may have to finish this up with webinar and conference calls. **VanderKooy** plans to have another meeting this year in second or third week in November. TTF members discussed potential locations in Naples, Florida or Corpus Christi, Texas.

GSMFC Travel Policy

The group was provided 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 additional questions regarding travel should be addressed to Teri Freitas, the Commission's travel coordinator.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

**STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Wednesday, August 19, 2009
New Orleans, Louisiana

Facilitator Dave Donaldson called the meeting to order at 9:55 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Ginny Vail, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Chris Denson (proxy for V. Minton), ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Joey Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX
Bonnie Ponwith (proxy for R. Crabtree), NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Larry Simpson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Mike Buchanan, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDENR, Rio Piedras, PR
Alan Lowther, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD

Staff

David Donaldson, Assistant Director
Wendy Garner, Chief Financial Officer

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved as amended with the addition of *Discussion of Data Confidentiality MOA*.

Discussion and Final Approval of FIN Funding Activities for 2010

D. Donaldson provided an overview regarding the status of 2010 funding for data collection and management activities. The preliminary numbers show GulfFIN line item at \$4.32M and RecFIN line item at \$3.47M. The Gulf portion of the RecFIN line item works out to be about \$638K. In addition, there are MRIP funds for recreational work in Puerto Rico (97K). So, the amount available for FIN funding in 2010 totals \$5.05M. The breakdown of the funding is as follows:

GulffIN line item	\$4,318,000	
SER administrative fee	(\$2,107)	
GulffIN - available		\$4,315,893
RecFIN line item	\$3,467,000	
AA administrative fee	(\$32,065)	
RecFIN - available	3,434,935	
Gulf portion of RecFIN (1/3)	\$1,144,978	
Economic surveys	(\$279,156)	
SEFSC data collections	(\$227,389)	
RecFIN - available		\$638,433
Additional funds		
MRIP		\$96,575
TOTAL AVAILABLE		\$5,050,901

D. Donaldson noted that a document outlining the history of FIN funding has been developed and shows that FIN has essentially been level-funded since 2005 and the group has taken a larger and larger percent reduction over the years. **L. Simpson** stated that FIN was originally developed as a \$7 million program and it has yet to reach that level. **B. Ponwith** noted that new money is needed so existing programs are not impacted by requests for additional funds. It was also pointed out that the GulffIN and RecFIN line items have been lumped into a larger FINs line item in NOAA's budget and while the FINs item appears to have increased in recent years, FIN has not seen any permanent increases.

D. Donaldson then provided an overview of the documents that were distributed to the group. He then discussed the summary of the activities for potential funding in 2010 that was developed by the FIN Committee. The list is attached (Attachment A). The Committee then discussed the various jobs identified in the draft statement of work. Job 1 will provide for the coordination, planning, and administration of FIN activities throughout the year as well as provide recreational and commercial information to the FIN participants and other interested personnel. It was noted that it also includes funds to conduct a facilitated session to assist FIN in mapping out the activities and tasks for the next five (5) years. Job 2 pertains to the collection, management and dissemination of marine recreational fisheries data. This task will provide for coordination of the survey, field intercept survey of shore, for-hire and private boat anglers in LA, MS, AL and FL to estimate angler catch using the existing MRFSS methodology, and data entry. It was pointed out that Commission began providing administration and coordination of the survey in Puerto Rico this year and will continue to provide that support in 2010. The states will also conduct weekly telephone calls to a 10% random sample of the Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida charter boat captains to obtain estimates of charter boat fishing effort. Job 3.1 refers to head boat port sampling in Texas and Florida and will provide for the sampling of catches, collection of catch reports from

head boat personnel, and gathering effort data on head boats along the coasts of Texas and Florida. It was noted that FIN funded this job as a placeholder until NMFS could secure funding for this task and never intended to provide long-term funding for this activity. Job 3.2 refers to the collection of catch data for head boats operating in the Gulf of Mexico via at-sea sampling. 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 head boat vessels, using the protocols established by FIN. 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. As is the case for Job 3.1, FIN funded this job as a placeholder until NMFS could secure funding for this task and never intended to provide long-term funding for this activity. 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. 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 has allowed for an increase in the number of species (from 5 to 14) sampled. And Job 8 refers to the collection of detailed effort (multiple gears/areas fished) from the commercial blue crab and shrimp fisheries in Louisiana. This activity will be used to test the methodology (developed by FIN) for collecting detailed effort from commercial fisheries. Detailed effort is not collected via the trip ticket programs so alternate methods need to be developed to compile this information. As additional funds become available, this activity will be expanded to cover other fisheries and other states.

The amount proposed for 2010 for all the jobs was approximately \$6.579M which meant there was about \$1.529M deficit. Therefore, the S/FFMC Committee needed to figure out how to reduce the proposed activities. As in the past, the S/FFMC Committee's approach has been to conduct a handful of jobs well instead of conducting all jobs poorly and the Committee members continue to support this method. **D. Donaldson** noted that there were some new jobs recommended by the FIN Committee: At-sea head boat sampling (Job 3.2) and detailed effort survey (Job 8). After some discussion, **the S/FFMC Committee agreed to remove the following new activities:**

- Remove funding for the at-sea head boat sampling (Job 3.2) – \$494,825
- Remove funding for detailed effort pilot survey (Job 8) – \$223,919

Total reduction - \$718,744

Removal of those tasks reduced the total proposed budget to \$5.861M which meant that \$810K still needed to be removed from the proposed budget. **D. Donaldson** stated that NOAA Fisheries had

provided FIN with an additional \$500K for this year, which helped reinstate various tasks. If NOAA Fisheries could provide that \$500K again next year, it would allow FIN to continue all of the ongoing tasks. Without the additional funds, it might be necessary to cut an entire job. After a lengthy discussion, the S/FFMC Committee developed three (3) options. Option 1 was contingent upon receiving the \$500K and then each agency would take an across the board cut of 5.4%. Option 2 was also contingent upon receiving the \$500K and would remove Job 3.1 (head boat port sampling) and Job 4 (menhaden port sampling) as well as each agency taking an across the board cut of 1.2%. Option 3 was based on not receiving the \$500K and Job 7 (biological sampling of recreational and commercial catches) would be cut. Since Job 7 was slightly more than the deficit, the remaining funds would be allocated among to the states based on their percentage of participation in the existing biological sampling project. After some discussion, **the Committee agreed upon two (2) scenarios: 1) If the \$500K was not available, Job 7 (biological sampling of recreational and commercial catches) would be cut and the remaining funds be allocated to the states based on their existing biological sampling participation percentages; and 2) If the \$500K was received, each agency would reduce their budgets by 5.4%. It was noted that the agencies would have flexibility about what would be reduced as long as the total reduction added up to 5.4%. Also, there needed to be some coordination regarding cuts to biological sampling to ensure the sampling is still regionally representative.** **B. Ponwith** stated she would contact the appropriate personnel in NOAA Fisheries to determine if the \$500K would be available in 2010 and let the staff know as soon as possible. **D. Donaldson** stated that once the disposition of the \$500K is known, he would contact the states with the needed action based on the appropriate scenario.

Discussion of Data Confidentiality MOA

D. Donaldson stated that it appears the current data confidentiality MOA which allows the Gulf States, the Commission and NOAA Fisheries to share confidential data is no longer valid. The issue arose while Florida was attempting to get access to the NOAA Fisheries' charter permit files and during that process, the NOAA General Counsel (NOAA-GC) ruled that the data confidentiality MOA was not valid because the rules and regulations outlined in the MOA has changed. Since this MOA controls the flow of confidential data, a new MOA needs to be put in place to ensure all parties can continue to share these data. The Committee agreed that a valid MOA needs to be in place and directed staff to examine the various avenues for creating and implementing a new MOA. It was noted that staff needs to get clarification about why the current MOA is no longer valid and should work with NOAA-GC in the Southeast Regional Office. **D. Donaldson** stated he would begin exploring this issue and would report back to the Committee at the upcoming Commission meeting in October.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION IN 2010

HIGH

Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities (ongoing)

Facilitated session for planning future activities

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

Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida (ongoing)

Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling (ongoing)

Operation of FIN Data Management System (ongoing)

Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Mississippi (ongoing/new)

Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama (ongoing)

Trip Ticket Program Operations in Louisiana (ongoing)

Trip Ticket Program Operations in Texas (ongoing)

Biological Sampling of Commercial and Recreational Catches (ongoing)

At-sea Sampling for Head Boats in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida (new/ongoing)

Detailed Effort Sampling of Blue Crab and Shrimp Fisheries in Louisiana (new/ongoing)*

*Please note that this item originally had an electronic monitoring component and only focused on the blue crab fishery. However, after discussing it with the experts, it was deemed that the electronic component would not provide any additional or useful data regarding effort. Therefore, the original project (for both the blue crab and shrimp fisheries) was put back on the list

LOW

Biological Sampling for Additional Species (new)

**Port Sampler Meeting
Meeting Summary
September 22 and 23, 2009
Panama City Beach, Florida**

Gregg Bray of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission called the Port Sampler meeting to order on September 22, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. The following were present:

Pete Antosh, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Chuck Armstrong, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Debbie Batiste, NOAA Fisheries, New Orleans, LA
Jay Boulet, NOAA Fisheries, New Orleans, LA
Beth Bourgeois, NOAA, Lafayette, LA
Brittany Breazeale, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Steve Brown, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Lew Bullock, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Guy Davenport, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Claudia Dennis, NOAA Fisheries, New Smyrna Beach, FL
Wes Devers, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Kit Doncaster, NOAA Fisheries, Brownsville, TX
Justin Esslinger, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Noel Estes, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Pamela Brown-Eyo, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL
Debbie Fable, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL
Gary Fitzhugh, NOAA, Panama City Beach, FL
Ted Flowers, NOAA Fisheries, Mobile, AL
Corey Gabel, NOAA Fisheries, Port Arthur, TX
Michelle Gamby, NOAA Fisheries, Tequesta, FL
Susan Gerhart, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL
Dave Gloeckner, NOAA, Beaufort, NC
Linda Guidry, NOAA Fisheries, New Iberia, LA
Lori Hale, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City Beach, FL
Richard Hall, NOAA Fisheries, Wilmington, NC
Kathleen Hebert, NOAA Fisheries, Houma, LA
Tom Herbert, NOAA Fisheries, Fort Myers, FL
David Hoke, NOAA, N.C.
Jill Jensen, NOAA, New Orleans, LA
Ken Kallies, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Baron Kalmeyer, FFWCC, Melbourne, FL
Albert Lefort, LDWF, Cut Off, LA
Edward Little, NOAA Fisheries, Key West, FL
Carlos Llull, FFWRI, Pensacola, FL
Charlotte Mansfield, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Stephanie McGrath, FFWCC, Panama City, FL
Terri Menzel, FFWRI, Pensacola, FL

Gary Moore, FFWCC, Cedar Key, FL
Christine Murrell, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Chris Palmer, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City Beach, FL
Edwin Pulido, FFWCC, Lauderhill, FL
Janalea Renaldo, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
Renee Roman, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL
Gary Rouse, NOAA Fisheries, Cut Off, LA
Nicole Shaffer, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Liz Schotman, FFWCC, Marathon, FL
Michelle Sempstrott, FFWCC, Panama City, FL
Phil Steele, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL
June Weeks, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City Beach, FL
Danica Williams, LDWF
Laura Wiggins, FFWRI, St. Petersburg, FL

Staff

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

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as amended.

Recruitment and Population Connectivity Questions with Otolith Chemistry

B. Barnett first recognized and thanked her co-author of the project, Bill Patterson of the University of West Florida, as well as everyone who supplied red snapper for the project. **Barnett** reported that the overall goal of the project was to look at population structure in the Gulf of Mexico of red snapper and where they move. Otoliths are used for ageing and in stock assessments. One object of this study was to determine if chemical signatures are different for red snapper in each region of the Gulf of Mexico.

Barnett described the methods used in extracting, cleaning, dissolving, and pulverizing otoliths, as well as the methods used in analyzing samples.

Update on Red Snapper IFQ Program

P. Steele of NOAA Southeast Regional Office gave a presentation on the red snapper IFQ program in the Gulf of Mexico which was instituted in January 2007. **Steele** discussed some of the objectives of the IFQ program including derby fishing, quota closures, market gluts, reducing bycatch and discard mortality, etc. He then explained the web-based system which allows for real time tracking, creating better records, assists enforcement, and saves time. **Steele** then

explained various changes in the program for 2010, including pounds of fish to be landed, and pre-approval of landing location.

S. Gerhart of NOAA Southeast Regional Office gave an update on the grouper/tilefish IFQ program which will begin in 2010. This is a multispecies fishery including red grouper, gag, other shallow water groupers, deepwater groupers, and tilefishes. NOAA will conduct workshops throughout the Gulf of Mexico prior to the start of this program. **Gerhart** reported that landing locations must be pre-approved for both the red snapper and the grouper/tilefish IFQ programs.

Shark Bottom Longline Observer Program and Shark Identification

L. Hale of NOAA Panama City Beach Laboratory gave a presentation on Shark Identification and the Longline Observer Program. **Hale** first reviewed large coastal sharks, small coastal sharks, prohibited sharks and pelagic sharks. She then described the ways to identify various sharks by the location and size of the dorsal fins, pectoral fins, snout length, angle of fins, teeth, and eyes. **Hale** also provided quick reference guides for the identification of sharks commonly caught on bottom longline gear.

Hale then gave a presentation on the Shark Bottom Longline Observer Program. From 1994 to 2001 observer coverage was voluntary, but in 2002 observer coverage became mandatory under the federal management plan for highly migratory species. In 2005 responsibility for observers was transferred to the NMFS Panama City Lab. Some of the responsibilities of the observers include recording length measurements on all shark species brought on board, identify discards, collect biological and statistical data on fish, sharks, marine mammals, and turtles, and record detailed gear characteristics. **Hale** then explained vessel selection, characteristics of the fleet, data collection, biological sampling, and safety issues on board. The above information is used in stock assessments, determining quotas, used in ongoing age and growth studies.

TIP/FIN Sampling Targets

G. Bray of GSMFC began the presentation by noting that in 2007 a new process began in calculating sampling goals for hard parts. The FIN has a work group that established a priority species list and for each species identified what were the cells of significance for recreational and commercial. There are approximately 14 priority species at this time with the possibility of

expanding this list if more funding were to become available, however it appears that there may be a lack of funding for next year which could jeopardize this data collection effort.

D. Gloeckner, TIP coordinator, NOAA Fisheries Beaufort Lab discussed general protocols for targets including species, state, year, quarter, gear, waterbody and sector. **Gloeckner** also explained how targets are calculated. In the near future samplers will be able to access sample targets vs. samples collected on screen. **Gloeckner** then explained precision and biases and discussed future projects including electronic boards, electronic scales, and hand-held computers.

Trip Ticket Systems

Status of State Programs – **J. Esslinger** of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) in Rockport, Texas began by giving a brief history of commercial landings in Texas. The collection of landings data began in 1936 and in 2005 a volunteer program was initiated for aquatic products dealers to use trip tickets. In September 2007 dealers were required to report landings using trip tickets. **Esslinger** reported that in 2009 there were 271 commercial dealers in Texas with 144 reporting using paper ticket and 127 reporting electronically. TPWD now has a full trip ticket staff and law enforcement support has improved although there are some problems with non compliance including late reporting and the inability to contact some dealers. However TPWD staff will continue to aid dealers with reporting errors and also to work with NMFS to resolve problems with shrimp landings which appear to be low.

D. Williams of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) described the establishment of the trip ticket program by the Louisiana Legislature in 1991. Funding became available in 1998 and the program started in January 1999. Since then commercial seafood dealers have been required to report landings on trip tickets. Information collected on trip tickets will improve the accuracy of stock assessments, as well as data on the impact of environmental changes and catastrophic events on the fishery. **Williams** noted that dealers are required to submit monthly reports to LDWF and every month LDWF sends out reminders to those dealers who have not submitted their monthly reports. Computerized trip ticket data software is available at no cost to dealers.

C. Murrell of Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) gave a presentation on the trip ticket system in Mississippi. She noted that oysters, live bait and commercial hook and line

fisheries landings are currently being collected under the trip ticket system. When Emergency Disaster Relief Program funds were distributed, trip tickets were completed in all fisheries which helped to familiarize fishermen with the process of completing and submitting trip tickets. **Murrell** noted that before Mississippi has a fully implemented trip ticket system, commercial fishermen and seafood dealers must be required to report all landings on a monthly basis. **Murrell** reported on the estimated number of trip tickets for oysters, finfish, shrimp, crab, and live bait. With changes to regulations and state statutes, the goal of full trip ticket implementation should be realized.

Species ID Conflicts/Differences between Port Agents and Dealers

P. Antosh of Alabama Marine Resources Division (AMRD) gave a report on the differences in identifying catch by Port Agents and Dealers. **Antosh** noted that many species are misidentified including gag grouper and black grouper, greater amberjack and amberjack, red porgy and white porgy. He and other port agents have been attempting to correct common errors in identification. Many of these errors are with bycatch. **Antosh** reported that he has seen improvement in identification by dealers.

Planning for Next Meeting

G. Bray asked the group for suggestions for a meeting location for 2010 and was given several ideas, including Galveston, St. Petersburg, Key Largo, and Beaufort. All agreed that September would be a good time to meet.

The meeting recessed at 4:00 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:30 a.m. on September 23, 2009 at NOAA Fisheries Panama City Lab

Staging of Gonad Condition Training Session

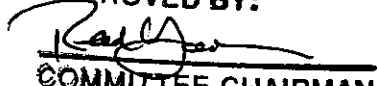
Biologists from the Panama City Laboratory conducted a reproductive workshop that was attended by all the port samplers. **B. Barnett** gave a presentation detailing methods for recording and storage of biological samples received at the Panama City Lab. **M. Cook** gave a presentation for training purposes on macroscopic gonad identification and provided some information on collecting secondary sex characteristics. After all the presentations port samplers were segregated into smaller groups and received some specific training on 1) formalin safety

and shipping, 2) a histological demonstration using slide mounted gonad tissue, 3) how to properly weigh and photograph gonads and, 4) a hands on macroscopic identification class. A macroscopic identification test was given to all port samplers after completion of the identification class.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

The above presentations are available at the offices of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 60th Annual Fall Meeting
Monday, October 12, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman **J. Hanifen** called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Jim Hanifen, *Chairman*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Gilmore “Butch” Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Bob McMichael, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Read Hendon, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL

Others

Myron Fischer, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Schuyler Dartez, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Karen Mitchell, *SEAMAP Technical Monitor*, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS
Terry Cody, Rockport, TX
Joanne Lyczkowski-Shultz, NOAA SEFC/NMFS MS Labs, Pascagoula, MS
John Walter, NOAA SEFSC, Miami, FL
Julie Neer, SEDAR Coordinator, Charleston, SC
Ryan Gandy, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Joey Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Ron Lukens, Omega Protein, Inc., High Springs, FL

Staff

Larry B. Simpson, *Executive Director*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, *Assistant Director*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, *SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Cheryl Noble, *Staff Assistant*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Lloyd Kirk, *SEAMAP Database Programmer*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

R. Hendon moved to accept the agenda as submitted. F. Martinez seconded and the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

L. Desfosse was referenced as **L. Kline** several times in the minutes and should be changed. **J. Mareska** moved to approve the August 4, 2009 minutes with these changes. **B. McMichael** seconded and the motion passed.

Administrative Report

J. Hanifen introduced Myron Fischer who will replace him at the end of the year as the Louisiana TCC SEAMAP Subcommittee representative.

J. Rester reported the 2003 Atlas was completed and printed. The 2004 Atlas will be taken to the printer before the end of the month and the 2005 Atlas should be sent out for review in the next couple weeks. He asked the Subcommittee to please review the Atlas carefully and send all changes to him before the due date. The TCC report was also completed and will be distributed at this meeting.

J. Rester reported that since the August meeting, the Fall Plankton Survey took place from August 25 - September 30, 2009, and there were approximately 140 stations sampled between NMFS, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Also, Mississippi is in the process of finishing their inshore longline survey.

Changes to SEAMAP Shrimp/Groundfish Survey Design

J. Rester briefly reviewed the process of changing the survey design. He stated most comments received about changing the design were positive. The Subcommittee agreed there were no major concerns with the survey design change but documentation must be included with the data to explain the changes. All agreed SEAMAP should be able to collect more samples with the new survey design. **J. Mareska** moved that SEAMAP should adopt the entire new NMFS protocols in survey design starting with the 2010 surveys. **B. McMichael** seconded and the motion passed.

Uses and Limitations of SEAMAP Data in Stock Assessments

J. Neer gave a presentation of the use of SEAMAP data in the Gulf of Mexico SEDAR process. She explained how the data are being used and why some of the data are not usable. A summary of the uses of the data in the SEDAR Assessment Process is attached (Attachment I) and a complete copy of the presentation is available through the GSMFC office or from the SEDAR website: <http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/>.

J. Walter continued the presentation showing the hierarchy of assessment needs from SEAMAP which are CPUE index, age composition, spatial distribution/ecological issues, and ecosystem interactions. He said the main reasons for the lack of use of SEAMAP data are short time series, spatial/temporal gaps, uncertainty regarding sampling design and documentation, uncertainty regarding changes in methodology – any change needs calibration, and the lack of advocacy. He presented how the SEDAR CPUE index

workshop report can be used as a guideline for SEAMAP. He concluded the presentation stating the importance to advocate for the index/data, use the SEDAR CPUE index workshop report as a guideline, for some surveys consider sets of fixed "reference" stations in addition to stratified random stations, and fishery independent data will become increasingly important as fishery CPUE becomes more difficult to interpret. X

He suggested SEAMAP use NEAMAP protocols as a guideline also. He said there is a lack of participation from the states in the SEDAR planning process. It is very important for the data collectors to be involved in the process. **J. Neer** stated the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council will be sponsoring a fishery independent sampling workshop and suggested the SEAMAP-Gulf people try to attend this workshop.

J. Hanifen stated maybe there should be a reassignment of rolls between NMFS and the states, having NMFS concentrate on collecting the landscape scale information and the states concentrate effort on collecting age data or gut data in fewer surveys. **R. Leard** said the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is creating a 5 Year Research Plan on collecting data and that can be another source SEAMAP can use as a guideline. **R. Hendon** and **B. McMichael** will give presentations at the next meeting on the costs and time it would take to do gut and age and growth analysis, isotope analysis, etc. It was suggested the states submit a MARFIN proposal to process samples for these type analysis.

SEAMAP Strategic Planning

J. Rester said **L. Desfosse** discussed this agenda item at the last meeting and he said the Subcommittee needs to decide what they envision for the future of SEAMAP. What type of fishery independent surveys will be needed and SEAMAP has to have a plan if extra funding is received. He said this plan will go directly into the 2011-2015 SEAMAP Management Plan which they will start working on at the beginning of next year. **R. Hendon** suggested that SEAMAP gear all future surveys to fit into the ecosystem based management. **J. Hanifen** again asked if SEAMAP should cut back on field type activities because NMFS is acquiring a lot of samples and focus on providing alternative data, gut and age growth analysis, and fixed reference station type questions on a limited basis. **J. Rester** said another possibility is deciding whether new surveys that have not caught on gulf wide were still a priority such as the Winter Trawl Survey. SEAMAP needs to decide if it is beneficial or should SEAMAP concentrate on the Summer Trawl Survey. **R. Hendon** suggested the states submit MARFIN proposals to process the ecosystem data. It was suggested to have a work shop on SEAMAP data needs and possibly attending the work shop the South Atlantic will be sponsoring. During the work shop, the Subcommittee should also discuss the future of fishery independent sampling and decide if new surveys are necessary and if any of the surveys that are currently ongoing should be discontinued. **J. Hanifen** asked the Subcommittee to contact **J. Rester** with names of speakers or participants who should be invited and stated **J. Neer** and **J. Walter** should also be invited to help give additional direction. **J. Hanifen** suggested the work shop be held at the new LDWF Marine Laboratory at Grand Isle.

Current SEAMAP Sampling by SEAMAP Partner

Each state and NMFS presented their current SEAMAP sampling programs.

Florida: B. McMichael said the overall goal of their program is to develop and implement a comprehensive research and monitoring program to assess nekton population within estuarine, coastal, and nearshore waters along Florida's Gulf of Mexico coast and to work collaboratively with other state/federal entities to maintain comparability of data across broad geographic regions. He said the specific objectives are to provide data for single-species assessment, provide data and biological material required for ecosystem-based management/modeling and to provide data to address emerging issues. He said Florida has six integrated fisheries-independent monitoring (FIM) programs but not all are funded by SEAMAP. Each are tied directly/indirectly to FIM projects throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

Inshore FIM (not funded by SEAMAP) was initiated in 1989 and it is a year-round monthly stratified-random sampling survey in seven major Florida estuaries. The Inshore Seagrass Survey (not SEAMAP funded) was initiated in 2008 and it is a monthly stratified-random sampling survey in April-November done in the outer portion of six major Florida estuaries. The Hooked-Gear survey (not SEAMAP funded) was initiated in 2006 and conducts annual stratified-random sampling in summer, and seasonal biological sampling in coastal and nearshore waters from 6-60 fathoms off the Alabama/Florida border south to Fort Myers. The camera/trap survey (funded partially by SEAMAP) was initiated in 2006 and is an annual stratified-random sampling survey in the summer done in coastal and nearshore waters from 6-60 fathoms off Panama City to Fort Myers. The SEAMAP trawl survey was initiated in 2008 and it is an annual stratified-random sampling survey in the summer and done in coastal and nearshore waters from 5-60 fathoms off Alabama/Florida border south to Fort Myers. The Baitfish Survey (not SEAMAP funded) was initiated in 1994 and is an annual stratified-random sampling survey done in the spring in coastal waters from 5-15 fathoms off Charlotte Harbor and Tampa Bay.

K. Mitchell asked B. McMichael if they will spend the \$317,000 in supplemental funding before the end date. He said the July survey was funded with that but has not cleared yet and they have a full year before the end date and the funds will be spent.

Alabama: J. Mareska stated Alabama has participated in SEAMAP since 1981 and has adhered to the Operations Manual established in 1987 as much as possible. Current programs include the winter, summer and fall shrimp/groundfish trawl survey, the late summer ichthyoplankton survey, and the semi-monthly inshore shrimp/groundfish trawl, seine and BPL trawl survey.

Forty-two foot trawls are used in the shrimp/groundfish trawls, and the surveys provide indices of species diversity and abundance at most life stages, collect samples in waters too shallow for NMFS vessels, and collect samples in state waters. They work up samples between stations on every fifth animal but they do not record bottom types,

barometric pressure, water color and sea condition on all samples. The ichthyoplankton surveys consist of neuston sampling and Bongo sampling (initiated this year at three locations). Alabama uses the electronic measuring boards, FCSC Version 1.6, and has purchased a CTD and motion compensated scales. The inshore samples are collected bi-monthly at fixed sites and gear includes 16 foot lined trawls, 50 foot bag seines and a beam plankton trawl. The inshore sampling provides additional life history data of estuarine dependent species and within an ecosystem management framework; estuarine samples provide diversity, abundance and mortality of early life stages. The inshore sampling processing follows the Gulf of Mexico Estuarine Inventory (GMEI) and SEAMAP protocol in parts, and collects water temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen at each fixed station and weight is recorded for each species and up to 50 measurements by species.

K. Mitchell asked what the supplemental funding covered. **J. Mareska** said the Bongo sampling and updating gear. **K. Mitchell** said Alabama has \$110,000 of the supplemental funding left and asked if it will be used before the end date. **J. Mareska** said according to his latest budget, all the supplemental funds have been spent.

NMFS – B. Pellegrin stated they are continuing spring, fall and winter ichthyoplankton sampling. He said they may not have the winter survey this year because it is on a biannual cycle. He said they are continuing all trawl surveys. They have completed the summer trawl survey and they lost two days of boat time due to mechanical problems but with the new sampling design, they were able to obtain all samples. They will continue the reef fish video camera monitoring and the longlining with Dauphin Island Sea Lab. He said even though there are 3 ships in Pascagoula, which are operated by another agency, they will be losing sea days. Historically, they have had about 240 sea days per vessel but there are discussions to cut that back to 175 days. Hopefully, this will not seriously impact the trawling surveys. The plankton and reef fish surveys are conducted on the smaller vessels. He said he thinks those surveys are important enough that they will not be impacted.

Mississippi: R. Hendon reported the east delta trawl survey takes place in June for four days; the west delta trawl survey in July for five days; and the east delta trawl survey for four days in October. Two stations are sampled for plankton during the June and October trawl surveys. The spring plankton survey targets larval bluefin tuna at the Loop Current. The fall plankton is done in the east delta area for three days and the winter plankton, funded by the supplemental funding, is done for three to five days in the east delta area and should end in 2010. The shark/pelagics survey is a seasonal, monthly, longline sampling survey north and south of the barrier islands. It is funded in part through supplemental funds which will end in 2010. They sampled at Dauphin Island with Alabama funds in 2009. The inshore trawl survey is monthly sampling at one station in each of six random grid areas of Mississippi Sound with 16 foot lined trawls towed for 10 minutes. It complements the long-term fixed station sampling.

R. Hendon said two stations were added in the Gulfport ship channel because of the port expansion, but this is not covered by SEAMAP funds. He said they used to process up to

50 organisms per species in commercial and non commercial, but now they are processing everything per SEAMAP protocol. As changes are being made, they are trying to change to follow SEAMAP protocols as much as possible.

K. Mitchell said there is \$173,000 left in the supplemental funding. **R. Hendon** said most of those funds will be used for the new shark longline survey. **K. Mitchell** asked if the survey will stop once the funds are spent. **R. Hendon** said it will have to be pared down but SEAMAP will have to decide if they want the survey to continue. **R. Hendon** said GCRL is pushing for data consistency and they are going to look at all data programs and try to use some type of access files with the FISCUS type format for all of the data.

Louisiana: **J. Hanifen** reported they are in the process of trying to do four seasonal surveys offshore and conducting plankton along with the seven they collect for NMFS. He said they are doing the summer and fall surveys in conjunction with the summer and fall NMFS surveys. That has been the ongoing pattern for SEAMAP data. The rest of the sampling they conduct is largely like Alabama and Mississippi, based on the old GMEI project protocols, a suite of fixed stations to sample shrimp, crab, groundfish, pinfish and oysters from the 7 major coastal bay systems across the state. They are trying to start a nearshore component with supplemental funds. Supplemental funds will also be used to revamp the data management system which should start early next year.

K. Mitchell asked if they will spend the \$392,000 before the end data. **J. Hanifen** said yes that most of it will be used for the data management update. Some of the funds were used for the water bottom survey in Mississippi Sound which was completed, but they have not received an invoice.

Texas: **F. Martinez** said they have two surveys – the shrimp/groundfish and the longline. The trawls have been done every summer and fall since 1985. The longline is done from March to May on a single area off Port Aransas. There are 20-40 sets in the summer on all five areas. The main line is 1nm long with 100 hooks and 1 hour soak time. The trawl survey methodology is done in 5 areas along the Texas coast with each area being approximately 30 miles long and up to 9 nm offshore. Sixteen samples are taken from each area for 80 samples a season or 240 a year. They use 20 foot trawls for 10 minutes.

K. Mitchell asked about the \$133,000 in supplemental funds. **F. Martinez** said most of the funds have been spent; it just has not been invoiced yet.

Internet Access to SEAMAP Data

L. Kirk said more improvements have been made since his last presentation on Internet access to SEAMAP data. He is still trying to determine the end user requirements. SEAMAP has two target audiences, the researcher and general public. Almost all SEAMAP data requests have been for the entire dataset. That is available online in Access format and users are able to download data in several formats such as CSV/EXCEL and graphics. New graphic software has been acquired making the data

easy to visualize in certain locations. The Oracle Discoverer interface allows the user to select specific columns and other things from the tables and download that into CSV or HTML, print as a PDF or any type of table structure, or print or export to many formats. He said he cannot express how powerful this tool is and the Oracle Discover Plus allows some capability to graph. Everything in the SEAMAP database is available online now. He showed several examples on how to use the online access taking the results and exporting it to many formats. All the data and interfaces are available and can be downloaded in Access format. The data is updated within two weeks when data comes in. He said one of the issues he brought up at the last meeting was the lack of consistency from the different states inputting the data. That has improved with the states using the SECF output except Louisiana and Texas. The Texas format is acceptable as long as it does not change. Louisiana is going to the new system and he will work with them on using the input format.

L. Kirk said in summary, 100% of the SEAMAP data is available online now for anybody to use. He is still expanding on the visualization tools and still needs suggestions on concepts of how to present the data to the end user in a useful, meaningful format. The Oracle Discover Interface will be in place and operational soon.

B. McMichael asked if there is a mechanism for metadata and **J. Rester** said that can easily be added in. The Subcommittee decided they still want to have a simple survey for users asking name, email address, and what they will be using the data for.

Update on the Polish Sorting Center

J. Rester said he invited J. Shultz to give this presentation because of the uncertainties that have been reported on the Polish Sorting Center (PSC). **J. Shultz** said the recent rumors of the demise of the PSC have been greatly exaggerated. There have been some problems over the past couple of years related to the fluctuating value of the dollar relative to the Polish currency, but most of the problems are from the uncertainty of the transition of that country to a free market economy. The transition has been taking place for a while but the joint studies program agreement that the U.S. and Poland has had since 1974 is still in place with both fully committed to continuing the longstanding and productive collaboration. This year's agreement for 2009/10 represents the 36th year of NMFS scientific association with the Sea Fisheries Institute (SFI). Over 7,000 ichthyoplankton and zooplankton samples collected by three NMFS science centers will be analyzed this year. Eighteen hundred and fifty of those samples were generated by SEAMAP surveys. The highly skilled scientists at the SFI plankton lab identify fish eggs, fish larvae and zooplankton from four large marine ecosystems including the east Bering Sea, Gulf of Alaska, northeast Atlantic Shelf and the Gulf of Mexico. The U.S./Poland joint studies agreement has provided data for NMFS stock assessments, studies in fisheries oceanography, and now data needed for investigations of ecosystem health and function. The representatives from the participating NMFS centers, of which J. Shultz is one, have written a white paper on the role of plankton studies in management, conservation protection of U.S. living marine resources, and the need for continued and even expanded support for this work. In this report, which is not ready to

be disseminated, they evaluate alternative options to the U.S./Poland joint studies agreement. The evaluation was based on a number of core principles such as longtime certainty of association, capacity for processing samples, the expertise it takes to analyze and provide data from the samples, and the continued collaboration among the NMFS science centers. They feel this latter point is as important as any of the others. The three centers have learned the value of conjoining the sample processing. There is efficiency in scale that includes sharing knowledge, personnel and equipment, and the collaboration facilitates problem solving and ensures similar standards across science centers. This is important in fisheries assessments. So, based on the evaluation, the representatives recommend continuation of the U.S./Poland Joint Studies Agreement. There have been a few recent problems and they hope to ensure a return to a multi-year agreement because being in the current annual cycle has caused some uncertainty and could be why some of the rumors have started. If they return to multiyear agreements there will be some flexibility to address fluctuating currency.

L. Simpson asked J. Shultz how often she does site visits and asked if she thinks it would be beneficial for J. Rester, as the SEAMAP Coordinator, to attend one of the visits. She said she goes every other year and thought it would be great for J. Rester to attend.

J. Shultz then gave an update on the plankton surveys and identification. **J. Rester** asked if some of the SEAMAP ichthyoplankton data could be summarized for the upcoming EFH update. **J. Shultz** said yes and their Lab Director is very interested in pursuing that.

Election of Chairman

B. Pellegrin moved to elect **Read Hendon** as chairman. **Bob McMichael** seconded and the motion passed. **R. Hendon** moved to elect **Bob McMichael** Vice Chairman. **B. Pellegrin** seconded and the motion passed.

Other Business

E. Roche stated start dates for the Gulf component range from January to March and said the budget or funding is never received before March. She asked the components to consider changing their start dates to April or May because they never get their budget or funding before March. She stated that 2010 will start the new 5 year cycle and the components said they will think about it.

R. Hendon thanked J. Hanifen for all of his hard work for the SEAMAP Subcommittee.

K. Mitchell said that she hoped SEAMAP will continue the new projects started with supplemental funds. **R. Hendon** said that will be discussed when the work groups meet.

With there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:58 p.m.

ATTACHMENT I

Table 1: Summary of the use of Gulf of Mexico SEAMAP data in the SEDAR Assessment process.

SEDAR Benchmark Assessment	SEAMAP Survey			Bycatch (Estimation and Index)
	Ichthyoplankton	Reef Fish Video	Groundfish Trawl	
SEDAR 5: Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic King Mackerel	Included	Not Submitted for review	Not Submitted for review	Bycatch index included bycatch number estimation requested by DW; does not appear to be used in assessment
SEDAR 7: Red Snapper	Included	Included	Included	Used both for bycatch number estimation and as an index
SEDAR 9: Gray Triggerfish	Included one index for surplus production 3 indices for age-structured	Included	Included	Estimates derived using a delta log normal model; not sure if used in final assessment
SEDAR 9: Greater Amberjack	Not available for review- samples available but need to verify identification	Used in Continuity case – Options 1 -4; “Preferred case VPA”	Not used – low abundance in survey data	???
SEDAR 9: Vermilion Snapper	Recommended for use as nominal index by DW; not used in assessment	Not used	Not used – too patchy	Used in bycatch estimation; model unknown
SEDAR 10: Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Gag Grouper	Not Submitted for review	Eastern video index included; possibly copper-belly index as well	Not Submitted for review	Not Submitted for review
SEDAR 12: Red grouper	Not Submitted for review	Included	Not Submitted for review	Not used – only one red grouper captured; also mention poor area coverage
SEDAR 15A: Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Mutton Snapper	Not Submitted for review	Included	Not Submitted for review	No records of mutton in shrimp trawl characterization
SEDAR 16: Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic King Mackerel	Fall Plankton included	Not Submitted for review	Fall Groundfish included	Used both for bycatch number estimation and as an index

(as amended)
APPROVED BY:
Tom Wagner
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES - 60th Annual Fall Meeting
Monday, October 12, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman **T. Wagner** called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m. and started with introductions. The following were in attendance:

Members

Jason Herrmann, ADMR, Dauphin Island, AL
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Ryan Gandy, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Harriet Perry, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX

Others

Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Ronnie Luster, CCA, Houston, TX
Craig Newton, ADMR, Dauphin Island, AL
Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Rick Burns, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Joe Gill, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Ocean Springs, MS

Staff

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

Adoption of Agenda

T. Floyd moved to accept the agenda, the motion was seconded by V. Guillory and passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

V. Guillory moved to accept minutes with changes, the motion was seconded by T. Floyd and passed unanimously.

Blue Crab Aquaculture Update

H. Perry reported that GCRL has a successful year in the Aquaculture Program; they were able to stock two ponds at the DMR Lyman Fish Hatchery and the next batch of juveniles will be going into a lined pond. The Aquaculture program, with permission from MDMR, was able to supply the Cobia Shootout with 3-4 inch live bait crabs and the third place fish was caught on one of their live crabs. **Perry** reported that they are

developing two potential industries that will be using the hatchery reared crabs; one for bait crabs in the sport fishing industry and one for the appetizer crab fishery – “cocktail crabs”. Due to the success of the Aquaculture Program, the hatchery team is developing a protocols manual.

Florida Update on Lipofuscin

R. Gandy reported that in cooperative effort with the Florida Fish Wildlife the Stock Enhancement Research Facility (SERF) was developed during 2009 to grow out larval crabs for the lipofuscin studies. To date however, they have not been very successful. GCRL had previously provided juvenile blue crabs to test and train on the fluorescence protocols. **Gandy** reported that Florida is hoping to have 1 year old crabs by 2010, they now they have crabs 3-4 months old. FWC has so far been able to verify the technique works using wild Tampa Bay crabs and are in the process of determining if the lipofuscin concentration in the eye stalk is adversely effected by different preservation methods such as freezing. At present, the samples must be run fresh, which limits the number of samples available. Eventually they will use known-age Florida crabs to verify the accuracy of the lipofuscin calibration curves to wild caught, known-age crabs.

H. Perry asked about resubmitting the ageing proposal to MARFIN or another agency for funding of this project. This item was tabled and will be discussed under other business.

Gulf Stock Assessment Data Set Progress

B. Pellegrin was unable to attend so **VanderKooy** gave a brief update. **Pellegrin** still has not had time work on the stock assessment and hopes to get Mike Murphy from Florida and Dr. Richard Fulford from GCRL involved to assist him. Hopefully it will quiet down this winter and that will allow him some time to work on the blue crab stock assessment. **Pellegrin** hopes to have an update by our March 2010 Spring Meeting.

Derelict Trap Cleanups

Louisiana – **V. Guillory** reported that in 2009 Louisiana did not do a volunteer program. However, the LDWF picked up 788 traps in Terrebonne Bay and to date they have picked up 17,972. The 2010 clean up is scheduled for February 28 through March 7.

Mississippi – **T. Floyd** reported the Mississippi did not have a closed season for derelict crab trap cleanup in 2009. However, MDMR staff continued the clean-up efforts. 478 pots were collected and recycled in late 2008 and 2009. The MDMR is currently planning for a 2010 volunteer clean-up, which has been funded through a grant from the Fish America Foundation and NOAA Restoration. The clean-up is scheduled for late January. The MDMR will conduct area fly-over’s, scouting trips and volunteer recruitment activities October through January. The closure will be from January 21 through January 30. This closure will only include traps within a half mile of the shore-

line. The first seven days will be for the fishermen to move their traps from the closure area. January 28-30, 2010 will be the days that the traps inside the half mile zone will be considered derelict and can be removed by volunteers. January 30th will be the only day traps may be turned in for recycling at any of three disposal sites. Actively fished traps may be replaced back within a ½ mile of the shoreline on January 31st. To date, almost 18,000 derelict crab traps have been collected.

Alabama – No report available. **J. Herrmann** to send data to committee members.

Florida – **R. Gandy** reported the blue crab fishery was closed in six regions of the state for periods of 10-days each. Prior to the closure of a region, all the “actively fished” traps were removed from the area by fishery personnel. The fishery closures and removal of “active” traps aided the identification and removal of lost and abandoned traps by the BCATRP.

The trap retrieval program involved volunteer groups and contracted fishery personnel, selected through a competitive bid process, to assist in the derelict trap retrieval effort. Payments were made to contracted fishery personnel based on the number of traps retrieved and the number of retrieval trips completed. Each contracted retrieval trip was composed of the contracted fishery personnel and an FWC observer. Observers were responsible for verifying the number of traps retrieved and recording the trap license number and location of each retrieved traps. All traps recovered, as part of this program, were destroyed and disposed of. Pursuant to Section 379.368, F.S. a retrieval fee of \$10 per trap is assessed to the trap owner for each trap retrieved. These fees are dedicated to the operation of the trap retrieval program. The trap retrieval program is funded by commercial saltwater license revenue and from retrieval fees collected. For each spiny lobster (crawfish), stone crab and blue crab endorsement (commercial license) issued, \$25 of the endorsement fee is dedicated to funding trap retrieval efforts. As a benefit, each license holder is given a retrieval fee waiver for up to 5 traps for each endorsement type held. Commercial licenses cannot be renewed until all retrieval fees have been paid.

A website to derelict trap retrieval and debris removal was developed to educate the general public and volunteer groups about how to organize and submit a plan for trap clean-up events http://www.myfwc.com/RULESANDREGS/SaltwaterTraps_index.htm. Volunteer groups may remove derelict traps and trap debris from state waters, when they organize a cleanup event and obtain authorization from the FWC. Volunteer cleanup events may take place during the open or closed seasons with authorization from the program coordinator. A volunteer cleanup event must adhere to guidelines established in Rule 68B-55, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.)

To date, blue crab traps have been completed in regions 2 through 5 (for a total of 3,063 traps retrieved since July 2009); the closures for the two remaining regions (1 and 6) are scheduled for January 2010. **G. Vail** reported that there were over 6,000 stone and lobster trap retrieved and this was Florida’s first closed cleanup.

Texas – T. Wagner reiterated that the 2009 closure ran from February 20 through March 1, 2009 and they removed 1,927 traps coast wide, utilizing 151 volunteers using 46 vessels. 54% of the traps came from San Antonio Bay, 23% from Galveston Bay, 10% from Aransas Bay and 9% from Matagorda Bay. Since the programs inception in 2002, 25,974 traps have been removed from Texas' costal waters. No data from the traps have been collected since 2007. There has been no discussion thus far on the 2010 closure, so it seems likely that the closure will run from February 19-28, 2010, with similar TPWD staff involvement as in 2009.

State Reports

Florida – R. Gandy reported that Florida landings for 2008 were 41% lower than the 2007 landings. The landings for the GOM decreased by 56.6% and the Atlantic landings decreased by 17.12%. These data revealed that for the first time Atlantic landings exceed Gulf landings by 20.3%. The total blue crab landings for the state of Florida have not been this low since 1950. Florida was under drought conditions from 2005 through 2007, which historically results in decreased blue crab landings. The Florida west coast was particularly hard hit by the prolonged drought. Coastal areas of west Florida and the big bend area north of Tampa were classified as under severe drought during this period, while north Florida and the Panhandle regions were classified as abnormally dry. The dry conditions resulted in high coastal salinities that stretched well into estuarine ecosystems. Early in 2008, the drought eased with the return of rain to near normal monthly levels. Near normal rainfall has been maintained through September 2009. The return to near normal rainfall amounts is anticipated to provide a slight increase in crab abundance, similar to historical trends. However, the overall trend becomes of great concern when the trend for "low years" which indicate the long term ability of the fishery to recovery from high fishing pressure and environmental stress demonstrates a continuous decline. The landings and catch per unit effort data for 2009 and 2010 will be important in determining any effect as there is generally a 12 to 24 month lag in the effect on this fishery. In 2007 there was a 6.5% reduction in traps and 24.5% reduction in endorsements. In 2008 there was a 29.6% reduction in traps and a 43.5% reduction in endorsements.

Alabama – J Herrmann reported that their data is being tallied and Alabama's state report will be emailed to subcommittee members when complete.

Mississippi – T. Floyd reported that total resident commercial trap licenses sales are down from 155 for the 08-09 season to 124 for 09-10*. These numbers continue to lag behind pre-Katrina, when there were 262 resident commercial crabbers. Non-resident commercial numbers are down with 18 licenses in 09-10* compared to 22 in 08-09, but still below pre-Katrina levels. Resident recreational license sales remain nearly the same with 510 in 08-09 and 499 in 09-10*. Non-resident recreational has increased from 39 last year to 59 so far 09-10*. Crab trawl licenses are down slightly from 64 in 08-09 to 61 in 09-10*. (* preliminary data)

Landings for 2008 were 450,037 lbs. with a value of \$397,328. 2009 indicates a slight increase with 369,232 lbs. at a value of \$413,390 through July, as compared to 270,162 lbs. at a value of \$286,950 for the same period in 2009.

A cooperative effort between the crab fishery and the MDMR continues to address accidental catch of diamondback terrapins through voluntary use of crab trap turtle excluder devices (TEDs). The MDMR is installing TEDs in commercial crabbing traps at no cost of the fishermen to deter incidental catch. These TEDs are 2" x 6" rectangles of either plastic or stainless material and are installed in the funnels of the traps to prevent terrapins from entering the trap. The MDMR is also reaching out to recreational crabbers by distributing TEDs at various festivals and events. To date MDMR has installed 2,004 commercial traps with TEDs (8,016) to date. The MDMR has also provided 1,084 TEDs to recreational crabbers through outreach programs at the Jackson County Fair, The Mullet Festival, Singing River Services Earth Day, and Celebrate the Gulf. The MDMR will distribute TEDs to all user groups at the 2009 Mullet Festival and 2009 Jackson County Fair. **T. Floyd** brought turtle excluder devices for subcommittee members to look at. The cost for TEDs is about .36 each.

The Mississippi Crab Task Force met in May and September to discuss current issues in the management of the blue crab fishery. Topics included possible legislative changes to allow the taking of sponge crabs, requiring restaurants to post where seafood comes from, and a Mississippi seafood promotional license plate to promote local seafood. All of these items were welcomed by the task force. The 2010 volunteer Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program was also discussed and received support of the task force.

Louisiana – V. Guillory reported that because the 2009 Regular Legislative Session was a "fiscal only" session, there were no crab related bills.

The Crab Task Force has six members (one dealer and five hard crab fishermen) resign from the task force during 2009. One dealer and one fisherman were recently appointment, and others will be filled as soon as possible. On October 9th the Crab Task Force, LWDF and the Louisiana Seafood Marketing and Promotion Board jointly held an "education day" for state legislators who serve on the natural resource committees. Activities included site visits to a soft crab shedding facility and a crab processing plant and on water observations of a crab fisherman. A lunch and t-shirts were provided; all expenses were paid with revenues obtained from a special crab trap gear license fee that is dedicated to the department's derelict crab trap removal program and to the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board for crab marketing and promotion.

The crab task force is aggressively looking at obtaining Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) for Louisiana blue crabs. Fisheries that meet the MSC standard are eligible to mark their product and a distinctive blue eco-label, which could give them a competitive edge in markets around the world. A pre-assessment report was done by a contractor; they concluded that certification was possible, but that there are several identified issues: diamondback terrapin bycatch; lack of a stock assessment; and, lack of thresholds to implement management actions. The crab task force member is currently soliciting bids

for a full assessment of the Louisiana blue crab fishery. Preliminary reports indicate that the Atlantic deep sea red crab will be certified.

The commercial blue crab harvest for 2008 was 40.6 million pounds at a value of \$32.1.

Texas – T. Wagner reported that 2008 commercial hard crab landings were 2.6 million pounds worth \$2.3 million. This represents a 25% decrease in landings and 17% decrease in value from 2007. Preliminary landings from January through June 2009 trip tickets are about 1.5 million pounds.

Round 10 of crab license buybacks concluded in March 2009, with 10 applications received, 5 buybacks accepted at an average of \$8,620 (range of \$7,500-\$10,000). Since 2000, 45 crab licenses have been retired, or 15.8% of the 287 licenses being held at that time.

Fishery-independent monitoring data showed stable though low catch rates in both bag seine and bay trawl gears, and a slight increase in young of the year crabs. All three indices are at or near the lowest values of the time series.

No crab regulatory measures are before the Commission or Legislature at this time. TPWD staff had discussions this past summer of two different crab proposals, both of which were tabled. The first was to address the possession of undersize (5") blue crabs for use as bait, by allowing a daily bag/possession limit of 20 crabs per day. The second was a crab trap area closure around the perimeter of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in the central Texas coast, with the objective of protecting declining blue crab and whooping crane populations. Staff will be evaluating the refuge area closure in more detail in the upcoming year.

Election of Chairman

V. Guillory made the motion to re-elect T. Wagner as chair, the motion was seconded by H. Perry and approved unanimously.

Other Business

VanderKooy reviewed the TTC report/scorecard on Blue Crabs and noted that all the recommendations that had been made on the original FMP and the current revision were now being included in that review process. If the state crab representatives needed support to accomplish changes to sampling protocols or to gather necessary data elements for stock assessment, this would be a good tool to show those needs.

VanderKooy led the discussion on outside funding opportunities to age blue crabs. He will email the proposals that have already been submitted to the entire subcommittee for reference and would like any input or ideas that subcommittee members might.

Adjourn

H. Perry made the motion to adjourn and T. Floyd seconded the motion. With no other business the meeting adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

**TCC HABITAT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 60th Annual Fall Meeting
Monday, October 12, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi**

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman Heather 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
Robert Adami, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Heather Finley, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Brian Alford, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Kevin Anson, ADCNR MRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Jeff Clark, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jan Boyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff

Jeff Rester, *Habitat/SEAMAP Program Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS
Cheryl Noble, *Staff Assistant*, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, *Sportfish Restoration/ANS Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, *EDRP Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Tony Reisinger, Texas Sea Grant, San Benito, TX
Joe Gill, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as written.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from March 16, 2009 were approved as written.

Administrative Report

J. Rester stated that the Commission's MARFIN funded bottom mapping project was finally finished in late March. He stated that the data layers had been posted to the National Coastal Data Development Center's habitat Internet mapping site. He stated that he has also provided the data to several researchers. **J. Rester** reported that the Commission's Aquaculture Grant was almost finished. The geographic information

system (GIS) portion of the project was completed in July and he would discuss this in more detail under agenda item 8. **J. Rester** stated that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Texas Habitat Protection Advisory Panel and the Louisiana/Mississippi Protection Advisory Panel would be meeting in late October and early November. **J. Rester** reported that the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the Port Dolphin LNG facility off Tampa was released over the summer. He stated that the Commission and the Council did not comment on the FEIS because fishery impacts would be minimal since it would be a closed loop facility. The main impact of the facility would be to hardbottom habitat when installing the pipeline. He stated that the impacts would be fully mitigated. **J. Rester** stated that the Bienville Offshore Energy Terminal off Mobile was revising their deepwater port application for a closed loop facility that would use an ambient air vaporizer to warm the LNG back into a gas. Finally, **J. Rester** stated that the Council would be updating their essential fish habitat (EFH) amendment next year as part of the required 5-year review process. He stated that there would be new information on deepwater corals and also larval fish distribution maps would be produced from SEAMAP plankton data.

Development of Commission Best Management Practices for Inshore Artificial Reefs

J. Rester stated that after the March meeting, members of the Habitat and Artificial Reef Subcommittees had developed a draft best management practices (BMP) for inshore artificial reefs. He stated that the group had revised the BMPs several times and was now presenting it to the full Subcommittee for their review. **K. Anson** discussed problems they had had in Alabama concerning oyster reef creation in areas closed for oyster harvesting. He stated that they envisioned potential problems because the public might harvest oysters from the created reef and become sick. Under the site planning section, he suggested adding another bullet stating "Site planners should be aware of potential recreational oyster harvest from inshore artificial reefs and provisions should be made to place appropriate signage around inshore reef sites." With no other changes, **J. Boyd** made a motion to send the draft Commission BMPs for inshore artificial reefs to the Technical Coordinating Committee for their approval. **R. Adami** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

ACF-ACT Update

R. Mezich provided an update on the water problems associated with the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Rivers (ACF). He stated that currently the drought has ended and all reservoirs were full. The reservoirs were no longer under drought management. Concerning the litigation regarding the ACF, a Federal judge ruled in favor of Alabama and Florida and that Lake Lanier cannot be used for water supply because Congress authorized the reservoirs for hydroelectric power. The judge ruled that the Army Corps of Engineers do not have the authority to modify the original law creating the reservoirs. The ruling stated that Georgia has three years to continue to use existing water supply levels while either working out a water sharing agreement, finding other water supply sources, or trying to change the existing law regarding the reservoirs.

2010 Freshwater Inflow Conference

J. Rester stated that the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) was sponsoring a freshwater inflow conference from February 7 to 11, 2010 to discuss the state of freshwater inflows to estuaries. He reported that TPWD was doing this in conjunction with the Harte Research Institute. The meeting would discuss the economic and ecological value of freshwater inflows, the status of freshwater inflows and estuarine health throughout the Gulf of Mexico, and threats to freshwater inflow. He stated that each Gulf state would discuss the various freshwater inflow issues from their state along with possible discussions of other states and countries. **J. Rester** reported that he would be attending the meeting. **K. Anson** asked who was representing Alabama on the planning committee. **H. Finley** inquired about Louisiana's representative also. **J. Rester** stated that he was not sure, but would send a list of the people who had been involved in the planning process to them.

Suitable Sites for Offshore Aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico

J. Rester stated that the GIS project was part of a larger aquaculture project sponsored by the NOAA Aquaculture program. The project sought to identify areas in the Gulf of Mexico that were suitable for offshore fish cage aquaculture. He stated that water depth, water quality, currents, and sediment type were the primary considerations for siting aquaculture facilities. Other possible considerations for aquaculture site selection were that the facility should not conflict with traditional highly fished areas; the facility should not conflict with other uses of the continental shelf; the facility should not be located in areas that experience frequent hypoxia; the facility should not be located in areas that experience frequent harmful algal blooms or red tides; and the facility should not be located in an area containing coral, seagrass, or other environmentally sensitive features. Water depths from 25 to 100 m in depth were deemed suitable for aquaculture. Ecological buffer zones of 3 km were placed around seagrass areas, coral, hardbottom, marine protected areas, Fishery Management Council designated Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, and National Marine Sanctuaries. He stated that safety buffer zones of 3 km were placed around shipping fairways, vessel lightering zones, and dredged material disposal areas. A 1 km buffer zone was placed around all artificial reefs and artificial reef zones to mitigate potential user conflicts. Water depths between 25 to 100 m in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico comprise approximately 160,000 km². As a result of this site selection process approximately 75,000 km² (47%) were deemed suitable for offshore cage aquaculture. **J. Rester** reported that additional site specific data should be gathered at each proposed facility before aquaculture operations are allowed to commence. Finally he stated that the results from this project defined areas suitable for fish cage aquaculture or where it should be allowed in the Gulf of Mexico. Some areas may be more suitable than others. Since offshore aquaculture has not been attempted in the Gulf of Mexico on a large scale, the project did not try to determine which areas within the allowable area were more suitable than others.

H. Finley asked about the Commission's mariculture policy and when it had been last updated. **J. Rester** responded that he was not sure when the Commission's mariculture

policy had been updated, but he knew that the Habitat Subcommittee had developed a mariculture policy for the Council a few years ago. **H. Finley** suggested examining the mariculture policy and updating it. **J. Rester** stated that he would check on the policy and distribute it along with distributing the Council's Aquaculture FMP.

Election of Chairman

H. Finley nominated R. Mezich as chairman with K. Anson seconding the nomination. R. Mezich was unanimously elected chairman. K. Anson was nominated and elected as vice chairman.

Other Business

K. Anson stated that the high schools in coastal Alabama had developed an aquaculture program and that Alabama was currently trying to help the program deal with issues surrounding the use of exotic species. He stated that they were encouraging the use of native species first before using exotics and also making the school and teacher ultimately responsible for any accidental releases of aquaculture organisms.

R. Mezich stated that Florida was looking for any information on the use of concrete mattresses to cover pipelines in the marine environment. He stated that parts of the proposed Port Dolphin LNG pipeline will not be buried, but will be covered with concrete mattresses instead. He stated that Florida was concerned about the long-term viability of the mattresses. **R. Mezich** also stated that Florida was considering developing more mooring fields for boats in coastal Florida. He stated that there was concern over impacts to seagrasses due to shading.

F. Courtney stated that during 2009, three thousand blue crab traps and approximately six thousand stone crab traps were recovered during their crab closed seasons.

R. Adami reported that when the Texas clipper was sunk as an artificial reef that it did not sink perfectly flat and was lying on its side. He stated that Texas had determined that it would not be feasible to try to right the vessel, so they were trying to work with the contractor that deployed the vessel to work out compensation. **R. Adami** stated that Texas had stocked approximately 12 million red drum fingerlings and that this was down about 50% from previous years. He reported that shrimp aquaculture in Texas had declined to four farms with approximately 900 acres in production.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 11:26 a.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES – 60th Annual Fall Meeting
Monday, October 12, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman Richard Cody called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

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

Staff

David Donaldson, *FIN Data Program Manager*, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry B. Simpson, *GSMFC Executive Director*, Ocean Springs, MS
Donna Bellais, *ComFIN Survey Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS
Gregg Bray, *RecFIN Programmer/Analyst*, Ocean Springs, MS
Alex Miller, *GSMFC Staff Economist*, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, *FIN Staff Assistant*, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, *Systems Administrator*, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX
Steve Brown, FWC/FWRI, Saint Petersburg, FL
Wes Devers, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS
Nicole Shaffer, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Karon Radzik, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Beverly Sauls, FWC/FWRI, Saint Petersburg, FL
Ellie Roche, NOAA SERO, Saint Petersburg, FL
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Claude Petersen, Bluefin Data LLC, Gonzalez, LA
Bob Zales II, PCBA, Panama City, FL
Joe Smith, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved and amended with the addition of Discussion of Data Confidentiality Memorandum of Agreement (M.O.A.).

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on March 16, 2009 in New Orleans, LA were approved as written.

Status of Biological Sampling Activities

Review of collection and analysis activities – **G. Bray** summarized the otolith and lengths collected for the thirteen Fisheries Information Network (FIN) target species for 2009. All states are doing a good job of collecting otoliths and working toward their species specific targets. Florida, Mississippi, and Texas were slightly behind on getting 2009 otolith data key entered so some of the observed shortfalls were larger than what samplers have actually collected in the field. **Donaldson** was concerned about states lagging behind with data entry. **Bray** explained that in most cases the data have been entered but until the states review those data and let **Bellais** know they are clean she can not move the data to the permanent table where it can be compared with the 2009 targets. The Data Management Subcommittee will review the final 2009 collection numbers at the March 2010 meeting. Subcommittee members were provided with a matrix detailing otolith analysis from 2005 to 2008 listing the five Gulf States. **G. Bray** mentioned the states are getting age data in on a timely basis. Florida recently delivered all of their red snapper ages from 2003-2008 to FIN and those data have been loaded to the FIN Data Management System (DMS). Florida is working to get age data for additional FIN target species in addition to red snapper. **R. Cody** mentioned that most of the glitches have been worked out at their end and providing data for additional FIN priority species should be easier. Texas had not delivered their 2008 age data but had indicated to **Bray** that those data would be delivered within the next 7 days.

Status of web-based data entry program – **D. Bellais** reported all the states except for Louisiana have been using the new web data entry program. Most of the states are up to date with data collection and just need to contact her to confirm the data are clean and ready to be moved to the permanent data table. **Donaldson** asked if Louisiana would consider using this new web based system. **Kasprzak** stated they would take a look at the system and let GSMFC know if it would meet their data entry requirements.

Status of Commercial Vessel Information Project

D. Donaldson reported at the prior FIN meeting it was decided to hire a contractor to help compile commercial vessel, dealer and fisherman information. The contractor has met with Florida, Mississippi, and GSMFC to start moving the project forward. The contractor will be meeting with Texas and Louisiana in the near future. The contractor is hoping to provide a report, maybe some vessel information, and some details on what

worked and what needs to change for additional data elements to be collected. The goal is to provide a report to FIN and the appropriate agencies to help eliminate the obstacles to collecting these data. **R. Cody** asked if data confidentiality problems have been addressed. **Donaldson** stated that this is still a problem and will be difficult to fix during this project. Identifying that issue in the report will be an important first step. **S. Brown** stated that there may not be a confidentiality issue with the vessel registration data and the Department of Transportation for Florida. **C. Denson** asked what vessels and how far back will we need data. **Donaldson** stated just current year vessels with landings.

Discussion of Logbook/Trip Ticket Reconciliation Process

S. Turner reported the SEFSC has been concerned with reconciling a large number of data sets including, TIP, logbook, trip tickets, etc. He thinks there will be an understanding of what data might be getting into trip tickets that the logbooks are not obtaining. A recent comparison of the IFQ database and trip ticket data showed red snapper landings 2-3% higher in the IFQ data than the trip ticket data. Reconciliation would help eliminate or explain these discrepancies. Identifying dealers is an important first step. SEFSC has been sending logbook data to Florida for basic reconciliation with trip tickets for a few years and they hope to add Louisiana and Texas in the very near future. **Turner** believes we need to work on the process of how to accomplish an expanded reconciliation process. Funding is likely necessary to create federal manpower for creating and administering this process. **Turner** was not sure what tools would be necessary for accomplishing data reconciliation. **Donaldson** believes the first step would be using the FIS reconciliation tool. **Donaldson** asked if the states would be interested in taking part in the reconciliation process. **C. Denson** stated he would have a problem with changing data based on differences between two self reported data systems. **Donaldson** mentioned the goal is not to change data with the reconciliation process. The goal is to establish a link between logbooks and trip tickets and identify and explain differences between these data sets. **Turner** stated he wants to identify differences and understand why they are there. **Turner** is concerned with differences in the number of reported trips from self reported data collection systems. **Donaldson** asked if the states would need additional funding for additional staff to administer this process. **Brown** stated Florida would definitely need additional manpower. **Kasprzak** stated Louisiana would also need funding for staff. **Cody** mentioned it might be easier if a formal process was determined first to help the states understand what the manpower needs might be. **Donaldson** suggested he and **Turner** continue to work on a proposal for FIS that if funded would get the necessary people together to begin the reconciliation development process. **Turner** mentioned in 2010 they are adding a vessel trip number on the VTR logbook form and they are hoping dealers will enter the trip ticket number. He hopes the states would add a vessel trip number to the trip ticket form to allow for cross linking between the two data sets. **Donaldson** asked the states how difficult it would be for the states to add that field. **Denson** stated it would be difficult to add that in Alabama. **Kasprzak** stated Louisiana just made a significant change to their trip tickets and they have already been reprinted and will likely not be changed for a significant time period. **Kasprzak** said they could potentially make a change to the electronic trip ticket form.

Brown mentioned there is very little room on the current form but they would consider it as they are in the process of getting their forms reprinted.

Discussion of Trip Ticket/IFQ Compatibility Reconciliation

C. Petersen gave a presentation on how the electronic trip ticket and IFQ systems work together to collect red snapper data. The trip ticket program is PC based with an internet interface data collection system. The IFQ system requires dealers to be logged onto an internet connection during data entry and transmittal. The current IFQ/trip ticket interface compares the number of pounds of red snapper reported independently to the IFQ website with the number of pounds entered into the trip ticket program for the same trip. This feature is included in all trip ticket programs used in Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas. The trip ticket program allows dealers to turn on the use IFQ option. When turned on an IFQ approval code box and verify IFQ button will appear. When dealers create a ticket they are allowed to enter their pre-established IFQ approval code. Dealers then enter their red snapper into the species section of the trip ticket program. They click on the verify IFQ button located in the species section. The trip ticket program passes the approval code to the IFQ server and the IFQ server will return to the trip ticket program the number of pounds of red snapper that relate to the approval code. When the trip ticket program receives the number of pounds of red snapper it will pop up a display with the number of IFQ pounds reported along with the number of trip ticket pounds entered. This design still requires dealers to enter their red snapper data on the IFQ website and submit a trip ticket to meet state requirements. It basically provides a validation tool to compare the pounds of red snapper entered through the IFQ program and the electronic trip ticket program. **Denson** asked if it was possible for dealers to only enter data on the electronic trip ticket program and allow it to populate the IFQ database. **Petersen** stated that dealers still must enter their red snapper data on both systems. **Petersen** also mentioned that it is difficult to completely integrate the two systems as the trip ticket system requires a larger amount of detailed data than does the IFQ system. **Turner** asked if this similar process will work with the impending grouper/tilefish IFQ program. **Petersen** mentioned he has not been contacted on this issue yet but he thinks it should be fairly easy to set up the same process for additional species. **Turner** asked the group if the addition of size categories in the grouper/tilefish IFQ system would be beneficial to help compatibility with the state trip ticket program. **Donaldson** stated this would be good because it would possibly allow the dealer to enter data on the IFQ website and then just populate the trip ticket program with those data, eliminating the need for double entry of those species. **Brown** stated that it would be easier to market the electronic trip ticket program to dealers still using paper tickets if we could eliminate the need for double entry between the IFQ website and the trip ticket program for those federally managed species. **Donaldson** mentioned he has been working on a letter with **Brown** and **Turner** to explain the benefits to dealers in Florida regarding the benefits of using the electronic trip ticket program.

Update on MRIP Gulf of Mexico For-Hire Logbook Project

B. Sauls reported the MRIP for-hire workgroup held a workshop in August to start the design of this pilot project. Participants ranged from state, federal, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), and industry representatives. A summary report is available upon request from **Sauls**. Participants were in agreement that 1) logbook reporting pilot system should be mandatory and enforced, 2) validation methods should facilitate enforcement, 3) the pilot study should be Gulf-wide in scope and 4) existing methods should be incorporated where possible. The pilot program may require regulatory authority that does not currently exist for all Gulf states. A major workshop recommendation was to keep the system simple and kept to a minimum number of data elements. Two types of elements identified are 1) data easily recorded by vessel operators and "validatable" or necessary at the census-level and 2) detailed data more appropriately collected by other means not practical at the census-level. The participants agreed the reporting frequency should be weekly and the format should be electronic. Minimum data elements were vessel identifier, captain identifier, date of trip, departure time and return time, hours fished, origin of trip, primary area fished using statistical zones, number of passengers, number of anglers, number of crew, gear, minimum and maximum depth, targets species, number of fish harvested and released by species. For a subset of species they would like to collect number released by critical depth intervals. The group may need to consider additional area fished codes as statistical zones overlap state waters. The additional data elements collected from dockside or at-sea sampling would be biological data from harvested fish, passenger origin information, economic data, size, number and species of discards, fate of released fish, bait types, hook types, and reasons for discards. Validation is important to help measure non-compliance, allowing for comparisons between self-reported and observed catch and effort to measure for over/under reporting, and provide an added benefit for collecting biological information. Validation methods discussed were hailing requirements using existing vessel monitoring systems that allow for validating self-reported effort and identify missing or late reports. The group discussed electronic vessel monitoring to additionally allow for validating self-reported area fished data. Dockside validations could be a benefit as there are several dockside surveys already in place in the Gulf of Mexico. At-sea validations using video monitoring or observers could validate discard data, provide biological data on discards and detailed angler-level and site-level discard data. The MRIP team had two major recommendations: 1) pilot test a hail-out requirement coupled with dockside surveys to validate self-reported effort and harvest data and 2) pilot test at-sea methods by collecting simultaneous video monitoring and human observers for direct comparison of methods and feasibility. The workgroup ranked electronic vessel monitoring low due to low industry support and the likelihood that it provides little additional information. The workgroup is working to finalize their recommendations for methods to include in the pilot study design, provide those recommendations to MRIP contract support, contract support will design the pilot study, and the workgroup will work towards funding for pilot testing during the 2010 sample year. **Cody** mentioned an outline was provided to this subcommittee ranking the validation methods, their uses, and comments from the MRIP regarding each method. **Cody** asked how guide boat trips were considered in discussion for selecting appropriate validation methods. **Sauls** stated

that unless each state had the specific authority guide boat operators would likely be voluntary participants in any current pilot study. She also stated the current dockside survey would probably not be enough to validate the existing guide boat fishery since the MRIP dockside survey is inefficient in contacting guide boats during routine sampling. **Donaldson** mentioned it is likely going to take multiple validation methods to properly validate these data due to the complex nature of the for-hire fleet. **Cody** stated he was concerned that the scope of the pilot study might be too large currently. **Sauls** stated if the pilot study can run under a mandatory reporting requirement then it has the potential to work Gulf-wide on federally permitted vessels. **Cody** was concerned that the costs of a Gulf-wide study coupled with the time to get a Gulf-wide study started could potentially hinder the success of this project. **Kasprzak** stated she thinks we need to develop reporting guidelines and realize that it is going to be difficult to make this work for the entire for-hire fleet. She also thinks that we will get some voluntary support from the inshore guide fleet in Louisiana. **Sauls** stated that the offshore fleet is impacted more by annual catch limits and major management regulations and are more in favor of an electronic logbook program while the inshore guide fleet is more hesitant to adopt a for-hire logbook program. **Campbell** mentioned Texas believes they have good coverage of their inshore guide fleet and are not interested in testing for that section of their for-hire fleet. **B. Zales** has done an informal survey of the federally permitted reef fish captains and slightly more than one-third stated they were against a logbook or trip reporting program. **Kasprzak** stated Louisiana's fleet is concerned with having to report at-sea using an electronic onboard system. **Cody** asked the subcommittee if they had any objections to the MRIP validation ranking system. There were no objections and the subcommittee made a motion to accept the MRIP project team recommendations for methods to include in the pilot study. The motion was made by **Campbell** and seconded by **Kasprzak**.

Review and Approval of At-sea Sampling Protocols

D. Donaldson stated FIN coordinated some at-sea sampling in Florida and Alabama in past years. The data were analyzed but the data collection methods were never approved. **Donaldson** asked if the at-sea protocols document could be approved as the FIN standard. **Cody** asked if the subcommittee approved these protocols would states be precluded from adding additional data elements to any additional pilot project or study. **Donaldson** stated that would be acceptable under current FIN protocols. **Turner** suggested the concept of the observer paying vessel fare could be changed to paying a fare only if required. **The subcommittee decided to take additional time to review the document and will take it up for consideration at the March 2010 subcommittee meeting.** Comments need to be sent to **Donaldson** by November 2, 2009.

Discussion of FIN Process to Access to Confidential Data

D. Donaldson stated this topic came up during the process of compiling the vessel, dealer, and fisherman information with contractor support. The contractors signed the request forms for access to NOAA confidential data. **Turner** did not recognize the people and the need for access to confidential data. **Donaldson** asked the group if there any

need for changing this system to make it easier for supervisors to make decisions on approval for data access. **Turner** mentioned in the future NOAA SEFSC would like to be better able to track which exact data the users are requesting access to. **Turner** feels more comfortable with time limits to data access as opposed to unlimited access. **Donaldson** mentioned FIN reviews users with access to confidential data every year to make sure everyone on that list still warrants having access to confidential data.

Status of Metadata Data Entry

D. Bellais reminded the states that everyone needs to be entering, reviewing, and publishing their metadata. **Donaldson** mentioned this subject needs to be a priority to the group.

Update on Data Confidentiality M.O.A.

D. Donaldson stated there are no problems with the Gulf States data confidentiality Memorandum of Agreement. The NOAA SERO had originally thought the statutes associated with the current M.O.A. were no longer valid but it turned out to be a complete misunderstanding. Data sharing between NOAA Fisheries, the Gulf states, and GSMFC should continue as usual.

Election of Officers

Kerwin Cuevas was elected as chairman. Chris Denson was elected as vice chairman.

Review of 2007-2008 Commercial Data

Each state provided feedback based on the review spreadsheets **D. Bellais** sent out prior to the meeting. Several states mentioned the FIN DMS numbers were lower than their state totals which likely indicated they collected some additional data that has yet to be delivered to GSMFC. Data will be redelivered and loaded into the DMS as needed. All necessary corrections will be made at the state data level and submitted to GSMFC for loading into the FIN DMS.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:32 p.m.

(2)
- there is an electronic option & paper option
for the operation to send data.

COMMERCIAL/RECREATIONAL FISHERIES ADVISORY PANEL
MINUTES – 60th Annual Fall Meeting
Monday, October 12, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi

P. Horn called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. with a quorum for both panels and the following in attendance:

Members

Philip Horn, Clark Seafood, Pascagoula, MS
John Rawlings, Colorado River Seafood, Matagorda, TX
Bob Fairbank, Mississippi Power, Gulfport, MS
Bob Zales II, Panama City, FL
Ronnie Luster, Texas CCA, Houston, TX
Darren Angelo, Delta Marine in Empire, Belle Chasse, LA
Pete Barber, Alabama Seafood Association, Coden, AL

Others

Beverly Sauls, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL
Mark Berrigan, FACS, Tallahassee, FL
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Joe Smith, NOAA – Beaufort Lab, Beaufort, NC
Dave Burrage, MS-AL SeaGrant, Biloxi, MS
Pat Burchfield, Gladys Porter Zoo, Brownsville, TX
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Frank Courtney, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL
Rick Burris, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
Neal Parry, NOAA-Marine Debris Program, Silver Spring, MD
Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff

Larry B. Simpson, *Executive Director*, Ocean Springs, MS
David Donaldson, *Assistant Director*, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, *IJF Program Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, *EDRP Program Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS
Teri Freitas, *Staff Assistant*, Ocean Springs, MS
Alex Miller, *Staff Economist*, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, *Habitat Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, *Sport Fish Restoration/ANS Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS

Introductions

Horn asked everyone at the table to introduce themselves along with the audience and to review the panel roster for accuracy. **VanderKooy** pointed out that the two vacancies on the recreational panel were being worked on.

Adoption of Agenda

B. Fairbank moved to accept the agenda as written, **R. Luster** seconded and the agenda was adopted.

Approval of Minutes (3/10/08 Galveston, TX and 10/13/08 Key Largo, FL)

The panel reviewed the two sets of minutes and **B. Fairbank** moved to accept both sets of minutes as written, **R. Luster** seconded and the minutes were approved.

NOAA's Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project

N. Parry of NOAA gave a PowerPoint presentation on the National Marine Debris Project and provided a little information on recent and current activities in the Gulf. Several items were discussed, including the absence of a Gulf coordinator in the Program and the issues with derelict/abandoned vessels in state waters that do not qualify for removal under the disaster programs. This is a growing issue considering the current economy and is a major headache for the states and the Coast Guard. **Parry** pointed out that only storm related vessels and debris qualified for removal under the Katrina/Rita disaster funds.

MRIP For-Hire Logbook Workshop

B. Sauls (FWC) gave a detailed presentation on the MRIP For-Hire Logbook Workshop and pilot program. **Sauls** reviewed the results and recommendations that came out of the series of workshops held around the Gulf. There were several recommendations from the New Orleans meeting 1) there needs to be a pilot study to test the "hail out" requirements of the For-Hire vessels leaving and returning to the dock, coupled with a dockside survey to validate self-reported effort and harvest; and 2) a pilot study to test the "at-sea" methodologies, which will include on-board video and human observers.

B. Zales moved that the GSMFC supports and recommends moving forward with the MRIP Gulf of Mexico For-Hire Logbook Pilot Program as outlined by **Sauls**. The motion was seconded by **B. Fairbank** and passed unanimously.

Update on Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles

P. Burchfield (Gladys Porter Zoo) gave an update on the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Bi-national Project. The bi-national project was initiated at Rancho Nuevo in 1978. In 2009, the bi-national team put in an estimated 108,000 man hours over 180 days on the beaches of Tamaulipas. Roughly 94% of the nests in 2009 occurred in the 78 miles from Tepehuajes in the north to Barra

Del Tordo in the south. The Rancho Nuevo nesting beach alone (18 ½ miles) accounted for 77% of the 2009 nesting. In 2009 this program protected 121,144 nests and 1,894,452 hatchlings.

The total number of nests and hatchlings protected and released by the program from 1978–2009 is 139,769 nests and 8,278,100 hatchling turtles.

Preliminary Results of Macroeconomic/Fuel Price Study

A. Miller gave a presentation on results of the macroeconomics/fuel price study. **Miller's** preliminary results from 2000-2008 indicated that for each 1% increase in fuel price angler trips into federal waters decreased by -0.66%; for each 1% increase in state GDP angler trips increased by 1.47% from 2000-2008; for each 1% increase in state unemployment angler trips decreased by -0.10% from 2000-2008; for each 1% increase in temperature throughout the GOM angler trips increased by .06% from 2000-2008. Data from these types of exercises can be used to evaluate expected fishing patterns as the U.S. economy rises and falls. Other variables could be examined in the future, such as boat sales as predictors of shifts in fishing patterns.

Artificial Reefs and Invasive Species

J. Ballard gave an update on the activities of the Artificial Reef Subcommittee and the Invasive Species Program since the last meeting of the CRFAP in October 2008. **Ballard** reported on the reefing of the Texas *Clipper* which was sunk in November of 2007, it went down on its side making the \$1 million in diver modifications unusable. After receiving estimates of \$5-6 million to upright the ship, TPWD looked for other reefing projects as mitigation from the reefing contractor: 1) Cleaning the tugboat *Coschecton* of all hazardous materials; 2) reefing the vessel at the TPWD nearshore reef site in Port Mansfield; 3) reefing over 800 concrete culverts around the *Coschecton*; and 4) reefing over 2,400 tons of concrete bridge materials at the TPWD Matagorda Island reef site. Louisiana is continuing to work on reefing oil/gas structures damaged by Hurricane Katrina and is hoping to reef several bridge spans from the Twin Span Bridges removal project. They are also working on developing reefs in Lake Pontchartrain.

Mississippi has restored approximately 85% of the reefs destroyed by Hurricane Katrina and has also created 8 new sites. This year, the MDMR has deployed approximately 20,000 cubic yards of crushed concrete and limestone on 21 inshore reef sites, reefed 1 steel hull vessel, 6 loads of concrete culverts, and deployed 230 Goliath Reef Balls offshore. Omega Protein has donated 176' pogy boat to the MDMR that will be reefed later this month. Alabama finished the deployment of 860 concrete pyramids over the last three years. As a result of the federal snapper/grouper regulations, the ADCNR will focus primarily on inshore reefs in the near future. Prior to Alabama opening the Gulf State Park Pier on July 23, reefs were placed around the end of the pier to enhance the fishing opportunities for people fishing from the pier.

In the last fiscal year, the FWC has created 30 new reefs, funded 5 monitoring projects, one research project, and two socioeconomic studies related to artificial reefs. In May, Florida completed reefing the 520' *General Hoyt S. Vandenberg* and is currently doing post-deployment monitoring of the ship to detect shifts of animals from natural reefs in the general vicinity to the *Vandenberg*. The FWC has also completed the second round of PCB testing of fish collected

from the *Oriskany* Reef site. The first round of testing showed an initial spike of PCBs, however, the average PCB concentration in *Oriskany* caught red snapper appears to be trending downward over time; which is consistent with the pre-sink leaching studies that were carried out. Finally, **Ballard** reported that the Artificial Reef Subcommittee will hold a joint meeting with the ASMFC's Subcommittee in St. Petersburg, Florida October 27-28, 2009.

Ballard also updated the panel on the Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Program that provides administrative support for the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel (GSARP), and funded a project to develop "Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers" brochures. "Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!" is a national campaign that helps recreational users become part of the solution in stopping the transport and spread of aquatic invasive species. This project resulted in approximately 85,000 brochures being printed, roughly 10,500 for each of our eight member states, with their specific states agency's logo and contact information on the back. The brochures were delivered to the state agencies before or during the spring meeting of the GSARP, which took place on April 1-2, 2009. The agencies will distribute the brochures during this years boating season, trying to get the information into the hands of as many environmental user groups as possible.

The GSARP is looking for outside funding for ANS demonstration projects and will be submitting a proposal to the USDA this coming spring. **Ballard** is working with the Commission's System Administrator to redesign the GSARP website. **Ballard** will provide a link to the Panel when it is finished and launched. ANS issues being addressed by the GSARP include the Louisiana tilapia population in the waterways of Plaquemines Parish. Live zebra mussels have been found in Lake Texoma this past spring and the TPWD has developed a monitoring program. The number of lionfish sightings has skyrocketed throughout the Caribbean in the last decade. The GSARP is tracking its progress and expects that all the Gulf States will eventually have to deal with this aggressive species. Finally, giant salvinia continues to be a major problem in Texas and Louisiana. There is a new Interagency Giant Salvinia Control Team which looking at possible "biocontrols" such as weevils in areas of heavy infestation. Since 2008, the coverage of the weed in Caddo Lake has more than doubled.

Emergency Disaster Relief Program

R. Hode, the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP) Coordinator, gave a brief PowerPoint presentation which addressed progress and spending by state within each of the sub award categories for both EDRP I and EDRP II. Specific emphasis was placed on the fact that EDRP I spending was at approximately 56% of its budget, while the timeline for the grant was at approximately the 60% point. Note was made that spending through October 2009 was running approximately 4 percentage points below the five year timeline and that this was an improvement over the previous report, where spending ran approximately 8 to 10 points behind. Reference was made to programmatic amendments that deleted funds in 2009 from Habitat elements and re-allocated them to the Cooperative Research element; and to expectations for further amendments as the EDRP I grant neared its end date. **Hode** pointed out that the oyster component was the most active component Gulf-wide and that the States had almost reached the required \$38 M congressional requirement for oyster restoration, with the current spending level at \$36.5 M.

With reference to EDRP II spending, **Hode** indicated that Gulf-wide reimbursements were well ahead of the grant timeline and that nearly 67% of the \$85 M appropriated for economic assistance to the Gulf fishing industry had been distributed during the first 24 months of the 60 month cycle. It was also noted that Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi had completed the distribution of their portions of the “Additional Assistance for TED/BRD Compliance” requirement and that Louisiana was nearing its completion.

Offshore Aquaculture Site Selection Update

J. Rester presented his work as part of the Commission’s aquaculture grant from NOAA Fisheries. He stated that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council’s Aquaculture FMP was submitted to NOAA Fisheries in January for their approval. NOAA Fisheries did not approve or disapprove the Aquaculture FMP, but allowed the FMP to take effect by operation of law. The purpose of the project was to select the most suitable sites for offshore cage aquaculture in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico, based on the use of GIS to support decision making. Water depth, water quality, currents and sediment type were the primary considerations for siting aquaculture facilities. As a result of this site selection process, approximately 75,000 square kilometers were deemed suitable for offshore cage aquaculture.

IJF Activities

S. VanderKooy provided a brief overview of the two FMP/Profiles currently under development. **VanderKooy** reviewed the activities of the IJF program. The Oyster FMP Revision continues to move forward. The Oyster TTF is working on an oyster stock assessment with Dr. Rich Fulford, USM/GCRL. The analysis will be a “proof-of-concept” showing that the surplus production models, used successfully in the Chesapeake, could be used here. The *Arenarius* “white trout” Profile has made good progress, despite IJF funding issues earlier in the year. The TTF anticipates that the profile could be completed by late spring of 2010.

VanderKooy reported that the Law Enforcement Committee is continuing to work on JEAs that drive most of the enforcement activities throughout the Gulf. The publication of the ‘Officers’ Pocket Field Guide’ for rules and regulations across the five Gulf States was met with overwhelming approval by the LEC.

VanderKooy presented the Second Edition of the otolith manual which was completed in July and includes several additional species for which data are currently being collected under the Gulf’s Fisheries Information Network (FIN) Program. The Second Edition of the manual has been well received and 240 CD copies have been distributed. The manual is available as a download from the GSMFC website as well.

Election of Chairman

B. Fairbank and **R. Luster** made the motion to elect **D. Angelo** as chair for recreational. **J. Rawlings** and **P. Barber** made the motion to re-elect **R. Horn** as commercial chair. Both were approved unanimously.

Other Business

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

Ralph E. Hode
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**EMERGENCY DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAM (EDRP)
MINUTES – 60th Annual Spring Meeting
Tuesday, October 13, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi**

The 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
Alton Waldrep, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL
Kevin Anson, ADCNR/AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jim Hanifen, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mike Brainard, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Richard Cody, FWC-FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX
Mark Berrigan, FLDOACS, Tallahassee, FL
Steve Geiger, FWC Research Institute, St. Petersburg, FL

Others

Ellie Roche, NOAA-NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
Logan Respass, Texas Sea Grant, College Station, TX
Neal Parry, NOAA Marine Debris Division, Silver Spring, MD
Rene LeBreton, LA Seafood Promotion/Marketing Board, New Orleans, LA
Wesley Devens, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Rick Burris, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Michael Travis, NOAA Fisheries/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff

Wendy Garner, *Chief Financial Officer*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Ginny Herring, *Administrative Officer*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, *EDRP Coordinator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Dave Donaldson, *GSMFC Assistant Director*, Ocean Springs, MS
Larry Simpson, *GSMFC Executive Director*, Ocean Springs, MS
Donna Bellais, *ComFIN Survey Coordinator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Opening Comments

Ralph Hode made opening comments thanking the states, NOAA-NMFS representatives, and the GSMFC staff for their attendance.

Participants and visitors were introduced.

Agenda

Hode then called for approval and/or amendments to the agenda. **There being no changes, a motion was made and seconded and the agenda was approved as submitted.**

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of March 13, 2009 held in New Orleans, Louisiana were presented for approval. Kevin Anson requested that the Alabama portion of the minutes dealing with the installation of remote monitoring equipment under the Assistance to Business and Industry sub award be amended to exclude references to **commercial** access sites. **There being no further changes to the minutes a motion was made and seconded and the minutes were approved as submitted.**

Introduction and Purpose

Special recognition was given to **Ellie Roche** who once again commended the states for timely reporting and the GSMFC staff for not only its reporting but also for the timeliness of interim reports as periodically required.

Hode gave a PowerPoint presentation which addressed spending by state within each of the sub award categories for both EDRP I and EDRP II. Specific emphasis was placed on the fact that EDRP I spending was at approximately 56 percent of its budget while the timeline for the grant was at approximately the 60% point. Note was made that spending through October 2009 was running approximately 4 percentage points below the five year timeline and that this was an improvement over the previous report where spending ran approximately 8 to 10 points behind. Reference was again made to programmatic amendments that deleted funds in 2009 from Habitat elements and re-allocated them to the Cooperative Research element; and to expectations for further amendments as the EDRP I grant neared its end date. **Hode** pointed out that the oyster component was the most active component Gulf wide and that the States had almost reached the required \$38 M congressional requirement for oyster restoration with the current spending level at \$36.5 million.

With reference to EDRP II spending, **Hode** indicated that Gulf wide reimbursements were well ahead of the grant timeline. Program coordinators and principal investigators were commended noting that nearly 67 percent of the \$85 million appropriated for economic assistance to the Gulf fishing industry had been distributed during the first 24 months of the 60 month cycle. It was also noted that Florida, Alabama and Mississippi had completed the distribution of their portions of the "Additional Assistance for TED/BRD Compliance" requirement; and that Louisiana was

nearing its completion. Texas noted that they continued to look at ways to add to the reimbursements to its shrimpers since the required 2% would amount to only a token payment of approximately \$20. Hode pointed out that closure on this element could possibly run the entire grant cycle because making contact with many of the qualified recipients was difficult due to address changes, relocations following the storms, and failure to re apply for licenses under new addresses.

Overview of Projects

ALABAMA

Kevin Anson reported on the Alabama EDRP I programs indicating that approximately 15,000 cubic yards of cultch material had been installed in shallow water areas under the oyster segment to date utilizing displaced fishermen. He also indicated that additional plants are scheduled for the remainder of 2009.

Anson reported that the Department continues to work with the State's Lands Division under the Habitat Restoration component to restore damaged marsh in key areas through the use of rip rap bulkheads and backfill. To date approximately 4500 lf of bulkhead has been installed in the Bayou La Batre area; backfill has begun and grass planting is to follow. Additional bulkhead work and back fill is scheduled to begin in the Point of Pines shortly.

Under the Cooperative Research component **Anson** noted that the Dauphin Island Sea Lab is beginning to analyze the finfish egg and larval data gathered early in the study and are seeing certain trends of snapper spawn in proximity to existing artificial reefs. It was further noted that most of the work under Cooperative Research for EDRP I is winding down and expected to be completed in the spring of 2010.

Anson briefed the work group on a special stock assessment-assistance project implemented to study oyster drill damage on state reefs through the use of impacted oystermen – essentially providing them with the same opportunities for stock assessment opportunities made available to shrimp, crab and other commercial fishermen under and comparable to the trip ticket program. In response to inquiries regarding the costs of this effort, Anson reported that each participant was allowed to provide three reports and that they were paid \$200 each – an amount equivalent to trip reports provided by finfish and other industry participants under this program.

Anson also reported briefly on the ongoing elements of the EDRP II program noting that the TEDS BRDs component had been completed, the indirect assistance/artificial reef studies are continuing, the waterfront access point monitoring program is continuing with some stations having been completed and software/hardware issues being resolved. The purpose of the monitoring effort is to aid in marine enforcement efforts and biological monitoring.

Additionally he reported that the seafood by-product recycling facility re-construction is experiencing equipment specification compliance problems. The equipment is being re-bid and the Farmers Cooperative is co-venturing with LEAD Certification groups for additional funding.

Anson reported that the Assistance to Fishermen component under EDRP II is essentially complete and that in addition to direct assistance to qualified fishermen and businesses the State was able to achieve a successful license buy out project with 48 area gillnet fishermen.

MISSISSIPPI

Dale Diaz reported that Mississippi's ongoing artificial reef restoration program saw the placement of 230 material of design Goliath reef balls installed this year at a cost of \$600 per ball including installation. Additionally, 540 small bay balls weighing approximately 500 pounds each were installed in shallow waters of the Mississippi Sound; as well as three steel hull vessel and 6 barge loads of donated concrete culvert. **Diaz** noted that follow up monitoring of these sites is revealing that the reef balls appear to be more resistant to subsidence than some of the other materials previously used and that they appear to be attracting and holding reef fish well.

Kerwin Cuevas, Artificial Reef Director, responded to questions reported that experience with reefs installed earlier in the program proved difficult in locating and anchoring on and that there was a need for the overall reef configuration to be larger. It was felt that once the reef locations became public knowledge recreational fishermen would face the same problems. As a result the Department began expanding the reef sites as the more recent ones were installed. **Cuevas** indicated that all sites installed thus far remain study sites and receive only minimal pressure.

Concurrently, the Department installed under the EDRP I Cooperative Research component, approximately 20,000 cubic yards of limestone at sites near public docks and fishing piers for access by small boat and shore fishermen. The DMR has installed a total of 7 such reefs in each of the three coastal counties this year - taking the total to 36 since restoration began.

Diaz also reported on the annual Kids Fishing Rodeos that serve to introduce children to fishing. This year one rodeo was held in Pascagoula, MS, in concert with CCA, GCRL, and the Jackson County Board of Supervisors; and saw over 100 children participate. Each participant received instruction on fish identification, knot tying, casting and each received a free t-shirt and a children's rod and reel. **Diaz** noted that this year's success is the result of flyers being passed out at area schools as opposed to notices in the newspaper and other forms of media in the past.

The oyster program saw two cultch plants since the March 09 meeting. One was conducted in the spring where nearly 38,000 cubic yards of material was placed over an estimated 1000 acres of water bottom; half was with oyster shell and the remainder was crushed limestone. **Diaz** noted that the shell typically costs approximately \$13 per yard more than limestone, but it settles better in muddy bottom areas. A second plant was conducted in August with nearly 23,000 cubic yards of limestone being placed over 500 acres on the Mississippi reefs south of Pass Christian. For comparative purposes **Diaz** indicated that if all the barges used in this year's plants were placed end to end, they would stretch nearly 2.8 miles.

Diaz reported that the oyster stewardship program is continuing and that 163 oystermen attended the most recent meeting. During the meeting, interests were expressed by the fishermen that the

State consider a limited entry program for oyster harvests and that marine training programs be developed and offered for people who wanted to pursue careers in the fishery.

Diaz also indicated that the invasive species program funded under the habitat element was continuing and that the Department was looking for ways to continue to fund the two persons currently identifying and treating invasive species on a permanent basis. Thus far, nearly 600 miles of area waterways have been surveyed with an additional 145 miles having been examined by air; and 85 gallons of approved herbicide applications have been completed. In addition to invasive aquatic vegetation, the Department is monitoring its streams and tributaries for the presence of tilapia and other invasives – noting that juvenile tilapia have been found in samples taken in the southeast part of the County near the NERRs waterways.

With reference to the Job Application program funded under EDRP II, **Diaz** noted that the first classes will formally begin in October 2009 and they will include opportunities for persons formerly employed and/or licensed in the fisheries industry. The purpose of the program is to provide job diversity training for displaced persons who wish to remain in marine fisheries careers but can no longer do so because of economic losses brought on by the storms of 2005 or economic declines in their present trades or skills.

LOUISIANA

Jim Hanifen provided a report on Louisiana activities under the Disaster Recovery program. Beginning with the EDRP I oyster element **Hanifen** indicated that within the past 6 months the State had completed 4 large cultch plants involving nearly 80,000 cubic yards of limestone and concrete covering nearly 500 acres in the Mississippi Sound area and Black Bay areas of St. Bernard Parish; and Lake Chen and Sister Lake in Terrebonne Parish. It was noted that the current oyster program is the most ambitious program Louisianan had been involved with over the past 20 years.

With reference to the Private Oyster Lease Restoration program **Hanifen** reported that this program is presently approximately 80 percent complete and is expected to be closed out in December of 2009. To date lease restoration work has involved the removal of debris on over 55,000 acres of leased water bottoms, installed cultch materials on nearly 9,000 acres and saw nearly 50,000 acres bedded with transplanted oysters.

In the Habitat program the State's data management system for recovering and storing lease data is under way. Imaging of maps back to 1903 and up to the present is ongoing and the data management component is being developed.

Hanifen indicated that the agreement with FEMA debris removal is approved and under way; however, the State has maintained a contract with its debris removal agent to address issues that cannot be handled by FEMA or which may not be addressed as promptly as may be necessary. At present the contractor continues to conduct water bottom surveys in an effort to identify debris size and locations. To date some 440 square miles of water bottoms from Lake Pontchartrain to Grand Isle have been cleaned by the State under contract.

Hanifen also reported on the State's project to manage water flows in its critical habitats for the benefit of both fish and water fowl. It was indicated that preliminary analysis reveal that where water control structures were installed in water ways fish will not pass through them regardless of the opening size.

In other Habitat components it was reported that the State's data management system continues to be developed and that it is expected to take the current system into the 21st century making data that is currently available only to Department personnel available to the public. The contract for this work is expected to be finalized in the near future.

Under the Cooperative Research component, **Hanifen** reported that the State is in the process of conducting a survey of dealers and fishermen who remained in business and were active between the storms of 2005 and *Gustav* in 2008. Participants were eligible based on landings and reporting and would receive assistance payments based on the tier format utilized for assistance funding under EDRP II. According to **Hanifen**, 4828 participants were pre-qualified based on licensing and reporting information available to the State; but that only 3000 fishermen and 300 dealers indicated a willingness to participate in the survey. To date 300 fishermen and 60 dealers have been cleared for payment (approximately 11 percent of the fishermen and 21 percent of the dealers); and nearly \$1.75 million has been paid out since June 2009. There are approximately 150 surveys being reviewed for completeness and the State is paying out on average approximately \$150 to \$200 thousand weekly. **Hanifen** expects the program to be completed by the end of 2009. When questioned on the availability of this data, **Hanifen** indicated that it is not complete at the present time but will be made available upon finalization of the study.

Hanifen also reported on a volunteer on-line trip reporting system for charter boat captains that the State is attempting to implement. The system is similar to the one currently in place for other commercial fisheries. Additionally, the State is working with LSU and the oil industry in developing a marina data base to put on line and make publicly available.

The EDRP II component was reported to have distributed nearly \$26.9 million during the first round of funding. This included nearly \$600 thousand for TED and BRD compliant fishermen. **Hanifen** reported a balance of approximately \$3.6 million in the overall program; of which \$225 thousand is yet to be distributed under the TED project. It is the intention of the Department to implement a second round of funding for the total universe of recipients once all efforts have been exhausted to distribute the entirety of the first round.

Of the preceding, it was noted that of the 60 pre-qualified marina owners who could possibly receive supplemental assistance for unrecovered losses following the 2005 disaster, 54 are pending final qualifications. A budget of nearly \$3.3 million has been set aside for this component. **Hanifen** also reported that the state is working with both the EDRP program and Louisiana Department of Transportation to restore access to the Elmer's Island area in order to open up this area for recreational access. Additionally, it was noted that the state is utilizing bridge rubble from the Lake Pontchartrain bridge replacement to build artificial reef areas in Lake Pontchartrain.

It was also reported that the LDWF received a special recognition from the State's Department of Social Services for coordinating with them on the statewide delinquent child support payment program. **Hanifen** indicated that where recipient fishermen were found to be delinquent in child support payments those funds were withheld from recovery assistance payments and sent to the DSS for distribution. As a result, nearly \$150 thousand have been turned over for these payments.

TEXAS

Lance Robinson provided the report for Texas indicating that most of their work involved oyster restoration both in EDRP I and II. He indicated that approximately 20 acres have now been refurbished in the East Galveston Bay area and the area is presently closed for a period two years in order to allow the new cultch plants to establish themselves and grow out.

On the mapping component, which is funded in Texas under the Oyster Rehabilitation sub award, it was reported that nearly all reefs which were identified in the 1990s initial survey have now been re-mapped and verified. The Department is now investigating additional areas that had not been previously verified and mapped; and because of improved technology and equipment **Robinson** said he expects the current/updated data for the oyster habitat will reflect increased acreage. It was noted that even though Hurricane Ike had a negative impact on the Texas coastal area it also resulted in the identification of habitat area that was not previously documented.

On a general note, **Hode** commented on his site visit last year where the Texas DWF demonstrated the mapping equipment that had been acquired through the EDRP. He also emphasized that the \$38 million Gulf wide requirement for oyster rehabilitation would easily be met because some of the work currently scheduled under habitat in Texas, for example, was actually for oyster habitat restoration. If that work is counted as Oyster Rehabilitation, the total amount of oyster work would exceed the required. Additionally, the combined budget for all states is currently approaching 50 million dollars.

Robinson reported that the EDRP I funds slated for restoration of access sites in Jefferson County at Sabine Lake are being leveraged with non-federal funds for expanded projects. A Memorandum of Understanding is currently being developed with Jefferson County, which is acting as the contractor, for completion of this work. The project is expected to begin early in 2010 and be completed in the spring.

The initial debris work scheduled under the EDRP I component has been completed; but because *Ike* added both additional infrastructure damage and debris, further work on this project is being reimbursed by FEMA. As a result, the remaining EDRP funds are likely to be re-aligned and are expected to go to additional cultch plants in the affected areas.

Robinson indicated that the TED reimbursement project is slow because of problems associated with locating the State's qualified recipients – especially following Hurricane Ike. At present they are working with State Marine Enforcement and other law enforcement agencies to locate the previously identified potential recipients. In addition, EDRP allocations for this component

are being augmented with funds from the State in order to ultimately provide a more palatable level of assistance to TED/BRD compliant fishermen. At present, under the "2 percent requirement" state fishermen would receive about \$20 dollars. **Robinson** indicated that the full 2 percent is being programmed for distribution and that administrative and other costs are being absorbed by the Department. **Jim Hanifen** noted that Louisiana has had good results through their administrative contractor in locating misplaced assistance recipients and that they would be happy to provide Texas with information that could possibly aid in this effort. **Hanifen** also noted that it was their intent in Louisiana to go out with a second round of TED funding in the event all potential recipients could not be reached or did not apply for assistance in order to reach its 2 percent requirement.

FLORIDA

Virginia Vail reported on the status of the TED/BRD additional assistance distribution under the EDRP II program. She indicated that all checks were mailed in May and that approximately a dozen had been returned as un-claimed. The Department has since resent the checks to forwarding addresses via certified mail, return receipt requested, in order to validate receipt and the new addresses. To date about a dozen checks still remain unprocessed and the Department is following up on these.

Steve Geiger reported on the oyster larvae dispersal project being conducted by the Florida F&WRI in the Pensacola Bay area. **Geiger** inherited the project when Dr. Bill Arnold moved to NMFS. According to **Geiger**, most of the data collection has been completed on this project and model simulation and validation remains. It was noted that preliminary findings showed that mid bay areas appeared to have the greatest recruitment and growth of oysters. This coincided with a number of variables considered during the data collection process including temperature, dissolved oxygen salinities, etc.

Geiger indicated that with the recent no-cost grant extension the project is expected to be completed on schedule provided Old Dominion University can complete the model simulations in a timely manner. **Geiger** did indicate that validation of this work is proving to be more difficult than anticipated.

Richard Cody reported on the electronic log book program funded under EDRP II in the for-hire segment of Florida fisheries. To date of the 1600 plus possible participants only about 46 have signed up for the "assistance for service" project. **Cody** suspects that a combination of issues account for the lack of participation; including the fact that many for hire fishermen are already participating in a telephone survey program, some are participating in a log-book program, and payments for this work are presently scheduled to be made only upon completion of the program which will be a period of one year. This also accounts for the low level of reimbursements through the GSMFC reimbursement process. **Cody** also noted that a number of species, especially those sought by in-shore fishing guides, are not included in the list for which reports are to be submitted.

In an effort to counter the lack of participation, the Department is conducting follow up letters and phone calls; and is implementing a payment schedule in which the for hire participant is paid

when on-board validation is conducted. They are also examining ways to include a more complete list of species to facilitate more participation by fishing guides.

Mark Berrigan provided an overview and slide presentation of oyster restoration activities being conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Community Services under the EDRP I program. He also indicated that they had finally received the long awaited deck barge funded through the EDRP II program and that they were now positioned to move forward with planned restoration work in both programs. **Berrigan** indicated that the Department had utilized staff as well as local contractors for deployment of cultch materials in shallow water areas and in locations that could not otherwise be restored using larger equipment. It was reported that shell put out in these areas in 2007 were producing well and currently had harvestable oysters on them.

Berrigan reported that the Department is utilizing a combination of fossilized shell acquired from mine areas near Apalachicola Bay, shell acquired from local processors, limestone, and clam shell acquired from processors in the Suwannee Sound area for cultch purposes. He also reported that the Department will continue to work with lease holders and processors for deposition of cultch in shallow water areas that require plants that are surgical in nature in order to assure that the cultch is properly located and that coverage is complete. Typical plants in these areas amount to 1 to 4 thousand cubic yards of materials which is small in comparison to reef plants currently occurring in open water reefs such as seen in Mississippi and Louisiana.

It was pointed out that the Department is attempting to utilize shell harvested from the Apalachicola Bay to restore reefs in the bay in lieu of fossilized shell or other materials. **Berrigan** noted however that this was becoming increasingly difficult since the number of processing plants in the Bay area has declined in recent years from as many as 40 to about 10 today.

Berrigan also reported on waterfront access projects that are being jointly funded with Franklin County and EDRP funds to provide suitable staging areas for loading and unloading by oyster fishermen. He noted that many fishermen are staging at sites which are privately owned.

In response to questions **Berrigan** advised the referenced barge was budgeted at approximately \$500 thousand and that final costs including outfitting by DCNR staff, and repairs to an existing smaller work barge is currently at about \$490 thousand. The new deck barge is 35 feet by 130 feet and the repaired work barge is about 30 by 15 feet.

There being no further discussion or business Wendy Garner advised that the next meeting would be March 2010 and would be held in Perdido Beach, Alabama.

**SEA GRANT – FISHERIES EXTENSION ADVISORY PANEL
MINUTES – 60th Annual Fall Meeting
Tuesday, October 13, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Committee Members Present

Gary Graham – Chair - Texas
Tony Reisinger – Texas
Logan Respass - Texas
Dr. Glenn Thomas – Louisiana
Dave Burrage – Mississippi
Peter Nguyen - Mississippi
Dr. Chuck Adams – Florida
John Stevely – Florida
Bryan Fleuch – Florida

Guests

Kristina Broussard
Judy Jamison

The meeting was called to order by Gary Graham at the Imperial Palace in Biloxi, Mississippi at 1:30 p.m. on October 13, 2009. The minutes from the March 2009 meeting were approved. The agenda for the meeting was discussed and approved by the committee.

MARINE RESORCE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The first presentation was made by Dr. Glenn Thomas. Dr. Thomas had recently been acquainted with an effort that was being conducted in New England by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. This program designated as the New England Marine Resource Education Program is designed to provide training to the fishing industry regarding fisheries management, science and the management council process. This project focuses upon bringing industry, scientists and managers into the same room for a 2-3 day educational effort. It was indicated that approximately 20 people attend each session. Dr. Thomas noted that there have been about 15 meetings per year conducted in the Northeast at a cost of about \$10,000 per meeting.

Dr. Thomas stated that 209 commercial fishermen, 21 recreational fishermen and 100 NGOs have participated in the meeting thus far. He noted that there is much less input and participation from the recreational sector on the New England Council hence less recreational activity than would be expected from the Gulf. Dr. Thomas indicated that about half of the members of the NE Council had participated in the training.

It was noted that the Gulf of Maine Research Institute was submitting a proposal to perform a similar pilot project in the Southeast. We discussed the possibility of collaborating with this group and perhaps offering Sea Grant assistance with training and coordination. Dr. Thomas spoke about Sea Grant's role as recently defined by the new Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act regarding our mandate to provide education programs in fisheries management.

Logan Respress moved that we should make an attempt to work with the New England organization. Tony Reisinger seconded the motion and it carried. Dr. Glenn Thomas indicated that he would approach the organization and investigate whether it would be interested in collaborative efforts with Sea Grant. Gary Graham suggested that Dr. Thomas contact Kathy Castro with University of Rhode Island Sea Grant and ask her about potential cooperative efforts that were performed with this group on New England. Graham recalled that Castro had previously mentioned doing some work with them.

HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS

Our group then focused upon the scheduled theme of the meeting - Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). Tony Reisinger gave an overview of HAB work that he has performed in South Texas. He indicated that Golden Algae was recently documented in some of the estuarine habitat and may pose a threat in the future. These algae have been of major concern in some of the freshwater impoundments in Texas where it has been responsible for significant fish kills. This is the first time that Golden Algae has been identified in the marine environment.

Reisinger gave overviews of the brown tide phenomenon in Texas and presented an update of its status. He focused much discussion on Red Tide *Karenia brevis* in South Texas and indicated cooperative work that he has done with Texas Parks and Wildlife and University of Texas-Brownsville regarding monitoring blooms that have occurred over the years. Reisinger stressed that the aerosol generated from red tide often was problematic for tourists and the coastal population. He pointed out that just recently, mortalities of koi and goldfish on South Padre Island was experienced from red tide aerosol that had drifted from the beach into ornamental garden pools. He further stated that necropsies had been performed on a domestic cat and several coyotes found dead on the beach during red tide outbreaks. Deaths of these animals were contributed to red tide.

Reisinger further discussed past problems with blooms of *Dinophysis* which at one time required closing down the oyster fishery in the lower Laguna Madre. He indicated that these blooms could result in diarrheal shellfish poisoning from consumption of raw oysters.

Tony Reisinger described a very successful volunteer program that he established in South Texas called the Red Tide Rangers. He told us about the very active role that trained volunteers are fulfilling in acquiring water samples for HAB monitoring. Reisinger also pointed out that a red tide bloom was currently taking place in South Texas and that fish kills were occurring.

Kristina Broussard with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources described their Marine Biotoxin Monitoring Program that began in 2007. She discussed the Mississippi contingency plan that has been established for HAB. She described the protocols that are established for sampling in their waters. She indicated the thresholds of densities designated for shellfish closures. She stated that sampling in Mississippi waters was a collaborative effort and that Gulf Coast Research Laboratory was one of their partners. In addition to water samples, Ms. Broussard indicated that DMR field staff was vigilant for blooms when in the field. She indicated that their protocol calls for observation airplane flights when deemed appropriate or necessary. She concluded her presentation by giving an overview of potential biotoxins that could be encountered from HABs.

John Stevely from Florida Sea Grant presented a report on HABs from the Florida southwest coast. He indicated that HABs were so common in his area that it is considered the epicenter for these events. He indicated that HABs were so problematic that they have severely impacted over a 1000 square kilometer area of sponge fishery over the past 10-15 years. Stevely indicated that there were many differing opinions among experts regarding the cause of HABs. He stated that certain areas in Florida are taking steps to diminish potential practices that can exacerbate blooms and pointed out that Long Boat Key had implemented a program to reduce use of fertilizer.

Stevely discussed educational programs and impacts relating to HABs in his counties. From an educational perspective, it was found that the general public got most of their information regarding HABs from newspapers followed by television. He stated that visits to a HAB educational web site at first were low but were increasing with time. He emphasized how technology now allows park rangers and related staff to rapidly and effectively disseminate information through a Blackberry which allows potential users to obtain real time information.

Dr. Chuck Adams of Florida reported that he had performed considerable extension work regarding HABs. He stated his work had been associated with public awareness, health impacts, costs associated with county cleanups, lost revenues to businesses and behavioral responses. He used examples of the impacts of HABs on tourism and stated that from one bloom, Sarasota had experienced a decrease of 50,000 visits or a reduction of 13.5%. Similarly, Siesta Key had experienced a decrease of 45,500 visits or a 25% reduction. Dr. Adams indicated that in 2000 HABs resulted in a 29% decrease in restaurant business and a corresponding decrease in hotels by 35% in Fort Walton Beach.

Adams indicated that in 2005, lodging in Lee County decreased by 25% because of a HAB. Adams further stated that Lee County estimated that it cost about \$250,000 per day for cleanup of dead fish on its beaches from HABs. He also indicated that a one-week closure in Western Florida would cost the aquaculture industry about \$21,000 per week.

Dr. Adams told the committee that his work is ongoing. He anticipates contacting about 15,000 people with a survey to revisit public knowledge of HABs and assess awareness

of the general public. He also indicated that he is involved with a unique study that involves local focus groups to assess strategies associated with a fertilizer tax, control impacts of from HABS with an ad valorem tax, or various strategies of mitigation relating to HABS.

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES EDUCATION

Bryan Fleuch of the Florida Sea Grant Program gave us an overview of programs that he is conducting regarding sustainable fisheries education. He explained outreach efforts that were taking place in workshops, exhibits, tournaments and fishing expositions to bring recreational fishermen up to par on new regulations and fishing techniques to reduce mortality. He described how handling techniques were being discussed with the recreational sector with the use of such aids as de-hooking devices and circle hooks. Fleuch discussed a catch and release brochure that his organization had developed as well as related CDs that are being distributed to clientele. He indicated that collaborative work has been conducted with NOAA, other Sea Grant Programs and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. He concluded by saying that evaluations from these efforts were very good and that these efforts were yielding positive impacts. He also told us that an excellent web site was catchandrelease.org.

OTHER BUSINESS

During the short time that remained, committee members discussed business and organizational aspects of the meeting. It was determined that Artificial Reefs would be the focus of our next meeting. Graham indicated that his term as committee chair was completed and it was time for Dr. Chuck Adams, who was serving as chair-elect, to assume chairmanship.

Discussion was directed toward how the committee should continue. Dave Burrage indicated that he thought that the meetings were a strain on travel budgets. He thought that conference calls may be more effective or efficient. This was met with some disagreement for other members. Dave did indicate that it was time for us to meet as a large Sea Grant group as had been done in the past. It was agreed that various project leaders would be contacted to get input into this type of meeting. There was discussion regarding bylaws and organization of the group. Logan Respass and Chuck Adams volunteered to work on a set of bylaws for the committee and report on them at the spring assembly. The meeting was then adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

*Recorded and Submitted by
Gary Graham, Chair*

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**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Tuesday, October 13, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi**

J. Smith called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. with the following in attendance:

Members

Ron Lukens, Omega Protein, Inc., Gainesville, FL
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA
Vince Guillory, LDWF, Bourg, LA
Mike "Buck" Buchanan, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, Port Arthur, TX
Joe Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
Rick Schillaci, Omega Protein, Inc., Moss Point, MS
John Mareska, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL

Others

Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Ben Landry, Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA
Kimberly Thibodeaux, Omega Protein, Inc. Baton Rouge, LA
Clinton Scheynyder, Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA
Tony Reisinger, TX Sea Grant, San Benito, TX
Shelby Drummond, Mississippi DMR Commissioner, Biloxi, MS
Steve Bosarge, Mississippi DMR Commissioner, Biloxi, MS
Read Hendon, Gulf Coast Research Lab, Ocean Springs, MS
Matt Hill, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff

Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Alex Miller, Staff Economist, Ocean Springs, MS

Introductions

Chairman Smith led the introductions of the MAC and the audience.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved by consent.

Approval of Minutes (March 17, 2009)

V. Guillory moved to accept the minutes as written, **B. Wallace** seconded and the motion carried.

Update on 2009 Gulf Menhaden Season

J. Smith provided an overview of the 2009 season to date. Through the beginning of October, 431,060 MT of gulf menhaden have been landed for reduction. This is up 14% from the same period in 2008 and is up 4% from the 5 yr mean. The season started a little slow with windy conditions in April. Menhaden companies had fewer difficulties 'crewing' the boats this year than in previous years. Landings in June were much better with good fish oil yields; landings remained good through the rest of the fishing season. **Smith** is projecting the year will end with 465,000 MT landed, which would be a 9% increase over last year and 4% over the 5 yr mean. 41 vessels operated in 2009 with 39 steamers and 2 run boats. The total effort through August is around 240,950 vessel-ton-weeks. The catch in 2009 is dominated by age-2s, even in areas like Cameron were historically age-1s predominate; this suggests that the '07 year class was strong compared to a relatively weak '08 year class. **Smith** is predicting a pre-forecast for the 2010 fishing season of about 460,000 MT. An updated forecast will be available in spring 2010.

Update on the 2009 Atlantic Menhaden Fishery

Smith reported that Omega operated 10 boats on the Atlantic for reduction in 2009. In addition, there were 4 bait boats in Virginia, 5-6 in New Jersey, and 2 in Rhode Island. Atlantic menhaden landings through September 2009 are around 109,935 MT, which is about even with 2008, and below the 5 yr average. Menhaden were abundant in Chesapeake Bay this year, but the Reedville plant had some trouble all season with production. The problems resulted in a number of the boats being tied up for several days over many weeks of the summer while waiting to unload. Age-1 fish were abundant in Chesapeake Bay suggesting that 2008 was a strong year class. Poor weather in Maine and Rhode Island moved the bait boats farther south to New Jersey this season.

Smith reported on some legislative items on the Atlantic:

1. Sen. Cardin (US-VA) has drafted a clean water bill for Chesapeake Bay; the bill contains a provision which would create a moratorium on menhaden reduction fishing throughout the Chesapeake in an effort to 'clean-up' the water. The moratorium is proposed to be administered through the EPA.
2. There is a high probability that the Atlantic herring quota may be cut by half in 2010, leading several herring bait boats to inquire about moving into NJ to fish menhaden as bait for the New England lobster fishery.
3. The Chesapeake Bay Cap ends in 2010 and the reduction fishery has remained under the cap to date. The Beaufort Lab has been monitoring the cap using the CDFRs in nearly real time. The AMMB of the ASMFC has sent Addendum IV, a Chesapeake Bay Cap Extension, to public hearings; it would extend the Cap for an additional 3 years (2011-2013).

2009 Review of the Texas 'Cap'

J. Mambretti reported that in 2009, the reduction fishery only fished around 45% of the TAC through early October. At this time, 235 sets have been made in Texas and 14.3 million lbs of the 35 million lbs TAC have been landed. There have been very few problems and the

monitoring has been going well, although **Smith** will need to adjust the catches using the CDFRs with the actual pump out information which will be analyzed over the winter. The CDFRs are generally within 5-10% of actual pump outs and the TAC credit will be adjusted appropriately.

Port Sampling Funding

L. Simpson discussed the funding situation with the menhaden port samplers. Around 8 years ago, the GSMFC added the sampling costs to the FIN Data Management Program. Previously, **Smith** often never knew from year to year if funding would be available from the SEFSC for sampling until after the fishing season had started. The amount required is minor, but at a recent SFFMC meeting, cuts were required in the FIN Program, due to level and reduced funding. Cutting the menhaden port samplers from the program was discussed, but the budget was reduced elsewhere. **Simpson** wanted the MAC to know that the GSMFC is committed to continuing the sampling at this time, but as funding gets more difficult, the possibility exists that additional cuts might need to be made in the future.

Proposed Schedule of Gulf Menhaden Assessment and FMP Revision

S. VanderKooy reported that the menhaden FMP was overdue for revision, but the MAC had agreed to time the revision closer to the next stock assessment. At this time, **VanderKooy** is anticipating beginning the FMP revision in late 2010 in anticipation of the 2011 assessment. **Smith** reported that there have been some rumblings about pushing the gulf menhaden assessment to 2012. Unfortunately, **Doug Vaughan**, one of the lead assessment scientists at Beaufort, is expected to retire in 2011. The SEDAR program has more immediate interest in federal reef species and would like to commit to those instead of menhaden. **Simpson** promised that he would do all in his power to not let that happen. Industry members pointed out that the public desires to have 'sustainable' fisheries products, but it is hard to provide proof of sustainability when we are managing a fish with a 3-year life expectancy with data that may be least 4 years old. Any sustainable fishery certification (as required by many aquaculture facilities and even the retail markets such as Wal-Mart) will require a current assessment, including recent fishery data, to properly evaluate the fishery.

Menhaden Recruitment Index Survey

J. Rester gave a summary of the conference call discussing the design and implementation of a survey dedicated to determining menhaden recruitment in the rivers and upper bays of the northern Gulf of Mexico. The details include the use of a 16 ft push trawl at 29 sites from Texas to Alabama at three intervals in early June, late June, and mid-July. Once the startup costs for nets and boats are spent, the survey could cost as much as \$200K/year. The group is discussing looking at outside funding sources as an experimental endeavor. At this time, it is unknown if the sampling would be better than existing state juvenile fish surveys. The group will continue to address a more realistic budget as the details are refined. State representatives will look at the proposed sampling regime and determine if there are ways to reduce the total number of sites by selecting more 'key' locations.

Regional Climatic Regimes and Menhaden Recruitment Proposal

V. Guillory provided a brief report on the proposal generated by Harriet Perry at USM/GCRL. A doctoral student recently looked at climate patterns, such as El Nino and La Nina, and their effects on blue crab recruitment and landings around the Gulf. Perry is submitting a proposal to SK to look at the same climate affects on menhaden recruitment in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

It was suggested that Steve Murowski of NOAA Fisheries should be invited to the March meeting in Alabama to address the Global Climate Change on Fisheries in the U.S.

The Relation of Gulf Menhaden Recruitment with Mississippi River Flow

Smith presented a couple slides from a recent poster by **Vaughan** and Govoni looking at the recruitment of age-1 gulf menhaden and November-March river discharge from the Atchafalaya and the Mississippi rivers. **Vaughan** found that recruitment is inversely related to river discharge. High flows lead to low age-1 recruitment and vice-versa. This study expands a previously published study by Govoni (1996) looking only at age-0 abundance and recruitment.

Gulf Menhaden Website Update and Review

VanderKooy went over the few significant changes recommended by **R. Lukens** on the Gulf Menhaden Website, hosted by the GSMFC. It was agreed that the 'Menhaden Facts' page needs to eliminate the point/counterpoint approach. **VanderKooy** will blend the comments from **Lukens** and update the other pages as needed and provide the website to the MAC as a PDF for their final review before launching any changes.

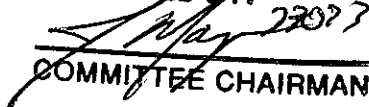
Election of Chairman

The rotation returned to the industry and **Guillory** moved that **B. Wallace** of Daybrook Fisheries, Inc. serve as chair for 2010. The motion was seconded by **J. Mareska** and approved unanimously.

Other Business

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

APPROVED BY:

 2/20/09
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES - 60th Annual Fall Meeting
Tuesday, October 13, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman **W. Chataginer** called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m. The following members and others were present:

Members

Walter Chataginer, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Chris Blankenship, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Jeff Mayne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Karen Raine, NOAA General Counsel, St. Petersburg, FL
Carmen DeGeorge, U.S. Coast Guard, New Orleans, LA
Jason Marlow, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Hal Robbins, NOAA/OLE, St. Petersburg, FL
Robert Goodrich, TPWD, Austin, TX

Others

Tracy Dunn, NOAA/OLE, St. Petersburg, FL
David McKinney, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX
Donald Armes, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Steve Atran, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Bob Zales, PCBA, Panama City, FL

Staff

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

Adoption of Agenda

H. Robbins moved to accept the agenda as written. The motion was seconded by **C. Blankenship** and passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the March 17, 2009 meeting held in New Orleans, LA. **J. Mayne** moved to approve the minutes with changes. The motion was seconded by **K. Raine** and passed unanimously.

State Updates on Shrimp Concerns

Mayne reported that Louisiana had a meeting on October 12, 2009 with the Shrimp Panel that was established by the Governor's office and they are working on several initiatives. They are trying to put together subcommittees to focus on different areas including marketing, labeling, branding, and looking at making some proposals to take some of the loop holes out of the country of origin labeling and dealing with state and federal statutes. They are looking at pushing Gulf branded shrimp, if you label shrimp that says it comes from the Gulf of Mexico, they in fact must have to be caught in the Gulf of Mexico. The Louisiana Governor's office is looking to see if this violates any trade regulations or any other laws. The Gulf needs to band together to work on the branding issues. We are not trying to eliminate imports; we just want them labeled correctly. Louisiana harvests 90 million lbs. and only about 10% of what they harvest is consumed inside the state. Imports are 700-800 million pounds. Texas reported that they have been told that 90% of U.S. shrimp are imported.

McKinney reported that there is a bill before Congress now to beef up the food safety component of the FDA with new boxing and shipping requirements. This program is not for shrimp at this time, it is primarily for *e coli*, like the recent scares we had with tomatoes and jalapenos. Part of this program is a new boxing and labeling requirement to not only say where something was packaged and where the product is from and how this is directly related to Homeland security and understanding where our food sources originate and if our food sources can be contaminated by infiltration. This might give the Gulf the opportunity to jump on board with this initiative.

Alabama passed a bill last year that goes into effective January 1, 2010 where restaurants have to make it known on their menu or on a placard stating the country of origin of their seafood. It is still not known how it will be enforced.

Mississippi reported that they do not have the authority to enforce labeling and they would need to get legislative approval. Three years ago they tried to pass labeling laws and none of them were passed. There is a permitted aquaculture site in Picayune, MS which is about 65 miles from the coast that will be raising flounder, pompano, lemonfish and blackfish.

The Texas agriculture department handles the marketing, branding and packaging of local shrimp. This year they passed legislation improving the marketing of wild caught Texas shrimp. The agriculture department was given some money to promote wild caught Texas shrimp and will be working with the industry on an ad campaign.

The USCG reported that they have very limited authority on-shore to investigate product branding or packaging operations.

Florida reported that they are behind the curve; they are only in discussions and have not taken any action. They have had some labeling issues dealing with snook from South America.

NOAA reported that they could spend every waking moment working on mislabeling cases.

IJF Program Activity

Oyster FMP –Goodrich reported that the TTF met last month and they are updating the Gulf States law enforcement section. **VanderKooy** will re-email the LEC members Section 6 (Law Enforcement Section) to ensure that they have the latest data. **Goodrich** is looking for an update from Louisiana on their oyster regulations; **Mayne** stated that he will get it to **VanderKooy** as soon as possible. The Oyster TTF requested assistance from the LEC in getting updated contact information for each states health department. **Goodrich** also asked LEC members to please get with their state representative to help provide a history on the oyster closures in each state. The Oyster TTF is working on an oyster stock assessment with Dr. Rich Fulford, USM/GCRL. The analysis will be a “proof-of-concept” showing that the surplus production models, used successfully in the Chesapeake, could be used in the Gulf. The rest of the meeting, was spent reviewing the document in an effort to get a final draft in 2010.

Arenarius Profile – The Arenarius “sand seatrout” Profile has made good progress despite IJF funding issues earlier in the year. The TTF anticipates that the profile could be completed by late spring of 2010. **Chatagner** asked LEC members if there have been any updates to the law enforcement section on the sand seatrout in the last year, there were none.

GSMFC Annual Law Summary and Officers’ Pocket Guide – **Freitas** reported that the 2008 Law Summary are primarily downloads from each states website and the publication has grown from 120+ pages to almost 300 pages in the last 3 years. The 2008 Law Summary was completed in July 2009, and is available electronically only. **Freitas** handed out the request for 2009 Law Summary updates and requested that the updated sections be sent to her by Friday, November 13, 2009. In July 2009 the GSMFC sent out Publication #166 “Rules and Regulations: Officers’ Pocket Field Guide 2009-2010” it was met with overwhelming approval by the LEC. The final cost for 1,000 copies of the waterproof version was \$4,238.00. Here is the GSMFC link: <http://www.gsmfc.org/publications/GSMFC%20Number%20166.pdf>.

ISSC Issue Preview and Discussion

Goodrich reported that he will bring up for discussion to the Patrol Committee at the ISSC meeting next week a plan to use VMS (vessel monitoring system) as a management tool for oyster enforcement. **Goodrich** asked if it would it be possible to get a MOA with NOAA for use of VMS for oyster enforcement or use their system? **Robbins** stated that is was highly unlikely because they plan on adding 645 VMS units and they only have the money for about 350 units. There are about 80 older units out in the field that do not have the new software and the new units cost about \$3,150.00. Fishermen are not likely to purchase them on their own when they are facing a cost of \$3,000 or more. Mississippi stated that they need more information on the cost of VMS before they could agree participate in this type of program, but they are in favor of VMS. Louisiana stated that they mirrored the regulations, requirements and infrastructure and they did it themselves and contracted with a VMS company directly. The cost was very minimal and it is built into their penalties for violators. Mississippi stated that they need more information on the cost of VMS before they could agree participate in this type of program. **Mayne** will send the information of their system to **Goodrich**.

The LEC discussed predawn harvest and overall they are opposed to predawn harvest; it is a bad idea and you cannot enforce it the dark. A Texas health department representative indicated that there is documented evidence that in the pre-dawn the level of *Vibrio vulnificus* goes up and that those oyster harvests will require more processing. Pre-dawn harvesting is not feasible from a health standpoint. It is a matter of time before they will require refrigerated boats for oyster harvesting.

Oyster Gardening

Florida reported that they have no plans for oyster gardening.

Texas has a few limited areas that are gardening off of piers and some areas in Galveston Bay. It is not a harvest situation, they are trying to replenish and rebuild the oyster reefs in the area. There are no prohibitions against oyster gardening and Texas biologists are behind it and promoting it.

Mississippi stated that they are suspicious of oyster gardening and the need to keep bad oysters off the market.

Alabama has had green groups that are filtering water and trying clean up the watershed. Oyster gardening should be restricted open areas only. Law Enforcement needs to make sure they are gardening in open areas only. They have not had any issues with them gardening in closed areas thus far.

Overall the LEC is not in favor of oyster gardening.

Transit Issues with Management Protected Areas and a Gulf Position

Florida has had the most issues with MPA's. On the Atlantic side, Florida has a new MPA that is 72 miles offshore of Jacksonville. Florida's position is to have vessels go around MPA's or have them not be able to transit through an MPA with any gear type on board. Having gear stowed is not enforceable.

It was reported that the Islands in the Stream did not go through, but no fishing zones and closures are coming.

NOAA reported that when you are transiting through and MPA there is no stopping, once you enter an MPA you must keep going. NOAA GC stated that no transit is the optimum provision for enforcement, but they have not seen any "no transit" provisions go through.

Louisiana asked if the entities that are pushing these MPA understand the cost associated with it. NOAA reported that they do. NOAA also stated they realize the distance from shore, the fact that there are few boats that can reach those areas, and that it is very difficult to enforce. The USCG is the prime enforcer of MPA's in large areas. The USCG reported that they use their

new aircraft (C144) with a sensor package to monitor MPA's, but it still requires boats and manpower to go out there to investigate.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

By rotation, J. Mayne was elected chair. J. Mayne made the motion to elect R. Goodrich as Vice Chair and the motion was seconded by C. Blankenship and passed unanimously.

Other Business

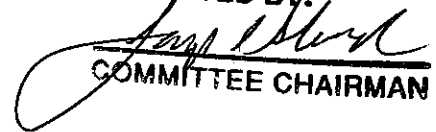
Raine reported that the HMS would like all comments on regulations go through the GSMFC or the GMFMC. This issue will be discussed in more detail at the LEAP Meeting this afternoon.

Zales reported that the For-Hire Workgroup will be doing Pilot Program in the Gulf of Mexico and that Beverly Sauls of FWC gave an MRIP presentation to the Joint Commercial Recreational Fishery Advisory Panel.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 60th Annual Fall Meeting
Tuesday, October 13, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman Joey Shepard 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, Dickinson, TX
Virginia Vail, FWC, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Tallahassee, FL
Richard Cody, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Karen Foote, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Joey Shepard, LDWF, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Baton Rouge, LA
Chris Denson, ADCNR/MRD, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Gulf Shores, AL
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Dale Diaz, MDMR, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Biloxi, MS

Staff

James Ballard, *Sport Fish/Aquatic Invasives Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS
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
Ralph Hode, *EDRP Coordinator*, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, *Systems Administrator*, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, *Staff Assistant*, Ocean Springs, MS
Alex Miller, *Staff Economist*, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Corky Perret, MDMR, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Biloxi, MS
Mike Ray, TPWD, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX
Tom Wagner, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Neal Parry, NOAA Marine Debris Division, Silver Spring, MD
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC
W. Borden Wallace, DayBrook Fisheries INC., Empire, LA

Adoption of Agenda

A motion to adopt the agenda; as written was made and was passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes; as written, for the meeting held on March 17, 2009 was made and passed with no opposition.

State/Federal Reports

Florida Report: V. Vail/R. Cody

The Florida Legislature concluded a difficult 2009 session in May. Given the fiscal shortfalls facing the state, the Commission's recurring budget was reduced by only ten percent and no positions were eliminated. The programs affected most by the budget cut were those funded by documentary stamp revenues [from real estate transactions]: land management, lake restoration and invasive plant management. Funding for law enforcement vehicle and vessel replacement, red tide research, and various other agency projects were also cut. The Legislature proposed a two percent cut in specified salary categories but Governor Crist authorized agencies to absorb the cut by further adjusting program budgets in lieu of eliminating positions if they chose [and were able]. Funding for artificial reef development and grant related activities were not reduced.

The Legislature repealed the statutory provision exempting residents from the requirement to hold a recreational saltwater fishing license if fishing from the shore or a structure attached to shore and created a resident shoreline saltwater fishing license with a fee of \$7.50. Resident seniors age 65 or older, disabled residents, residents home on military leave, residents receiving financial assistance from specified government programs, residents fishing in their resident county using natural baits and a pole without a line retrieval mechanism, and youths under the age of 16 are not required to hold a recreational saltwater fishing license. The new license requirement went into effect on August 1; it's estimated that annual sales will be in the range of 115,000 to 185,000. The anticipated revenues from this license precluded a need to further reduce funding for law enforcement and research activities.

The Legislature also: increased fees for several Commission recreational licenses and permits, including the snook permit [from \$2 to \$10] and the spiny lobster permit [from \$2 to \$4], effective July 1, 2010; dedicated a portion of the license fees [up to 10%] to the promotion of hunting and sport fishing activities, especially those providing opportunities for youth participation; and established penalties if sea grasses in Florida's aquatic preserves were damaged due to carelessness.

With reference to the state artificial reef program, during the last fiscal year 30 reefs were constructed through grants to seven local coastal governments. In addition, five monitoring projects, one research project and two socioeconomic studies were funded. The nine year saga of the 520 ft. long former missile tracking ship General Hoyt S. Vandenberg concluded in late May when it was successfully sunk within the designated permitted area six miles off Key West

inside the boundaries of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The vessel sank upright in 142 ft. of water within one minute and 47 seconds, following the opening of 44 holes below the waterline (22 on each side of the vessel) with explosive cutting charges. The vessel has a vertical navigational clearance of about 45 ft and rests in a designated navigational "Area to Be Avoided". Six mooring buoys have been attached to the ship. About 500 private vessels were present to observe the sinking from outside a one mile safety zone. Post-deployment monitoring of the Vandenberg to detect user shifts from natural reefs in the general vicinity to the Vandenberg continues. Baseline pre-sink data of half a dozen sites was collected prior to the vessel being deployed. The Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) is currently receiving funding from FWC to conduct quarterly fish count surveys on the Vandenberg and on some surrounding natural reefs. The total cost of this project was approximately \$8.6 million, including \$1.25 million from the U.S. Maritime Administration, \$1 million appropriated by the Florida Legislature to FWC, and \$1.6 million from the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development. The remainder was provided by the City of Key West, Monroe County, and the Monroe County Tourist Development Council. Completion of the final closeout report to MARAD is pending receipt of data from the primary contractor and the City of Key West.

The Oriskany Reef, a 910 ft aircraft carrier sunk in May 2006 in 212 ft of water 23 nautical miles southeast of Pensacola, remains a popular fishing and diving site despite settling 8-10 feet as a result of 30 ft waves during Hurricane Gustav. This increased the depth to the flight deck from 137 to 147 ft. and the depth to the top of the superstructure from 68 to 78 feet. Monitoring of PCB levels in red snapper and other fishes at the Oriskany Reef continues. Texas A and M's Geological and Environmental Resource Group's analytical lab tests samples for 209 polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) congeners. For the Oriskany Reef, EPA established a Tier 1 monitoring total PCB screening level of .020 parts per million (20 parts per billion or 20,000 parts per trillion). Mean values above this level would trigger a more intensive (Tier 2) sampling effort. The Florida Department of Health's advisory trigger is 50,000 parts per trillion total PCBs (50 parts per billion). Of the fish sampled in April 2009, six of thirty fish (20%) exceeded the EPA Tier 1 screening level; four of these six samples exceeded the Florida Department of Health screening level. The remaining 24 ranged in total PCB tissue concentration from 2,528 p/g to 17,029 p/g. The average PCB concentration in Oriskany caught red snapper appears to be trending downward over time. Staff are currently working on a report for the EPA, summarizing the results of the sampling conducted from December 2007- April 2009.

Last Spring the Commission approved a series of regional 10 day closures in the blue crab fishery to allow retrieval of abandoned, lost or derelict crab traps. In July and August 2009, FWC contractors removed 1,830 blue crab traps from coastal and inland waters from Nassau County on the Georgia border south through Monroe County and north to the Wakulla/Franklin County line in the Panhandle. Another 1,024 lost or abandoned traps were removed by FWC authorized volunteer efforts. The traditional trap retrieval program recovered 6,108 lost or abandoned spiny lobster and stone crab traps during June and July this year. Blue crab trap retrieval will take place in the St. Johns River [east coast] and the western Panhandle early next year.

Special Activity Licenses: The Commission issues Special Activity Licenses (SAL) to allow eligible activities otherwise prohibited by law to proceed. Such activities involve collection of

undersize or oversize specimens, collections during a closed season or in a closed area, and use of prohibited gears. In the 2008/2009 fiscal year, 145 SALs were issued, primarily for education/exhibition purposes [74] and scientific research [60] although 9 were issued for stock collections and releases.

Recent Commission regulatory actions include:

- Approved (June 2009) of amendments to the Commission's rules for Gulf gag and red groupers and shallow water groupers to be consistent with regulations for these species in the Gulf federal waters.
- With reference to red snapper, in June 2009 the Commission reduced the Gulf red snapper recreational fishing season to two and a half months [June 1 – August 14] to be consistent with the open/closed seasons in Gulf federal waters.
- Approved (September 2009) amendments to rules governing vermilion snapper in state waters of the Atlantic to be consistent with regulations for that species in federal waters of the Atlantic.
- Approved amendments to the rules governing issuance of Special Activity Licenses (SAL) to clarify application and evaluation criteria, address genetic and health concerns for captive specimens and, where applicable, their authorized releases, and allow researchers to apply for a SAL to test innovative gears.
- Approved amendments to the rules governing commercial harvest of blue crabs to create a tiered administrative penalty system that allows the penalties to be assessed relative to the severity of the violation and the number of previous violations up to the maximum amount allowed by statute for violations of the blue crab effort management program.
- Approved amendments to the rules governing snook to clarify that the Commission prohibits the sale of snook harvested or taken within or without the state in order to fully protect snook from illegal sales or importation.

Florida data collection:

Since January 1, 2009, A total of 165,360 trip tickets have been received of which 94,622 (57.2%) were electronic. During the same time, 168,820 tickets were edited, of which 97,148 (57.5%) were submitted electronically. Electronic tickets accounted for almost 66% of species records received. Totals for received and edited species records for January – September are 385,505 and 392,903, respectively. The numbers of tickets and species records received and edited show an increase over numbers reported for 2008 for the same period.

To date (through wave 4, 2009), all recreational saltwater angler intercept quotas for shore, charter and private boat modes have been met. The truncated red snapper season in the panhandle contributed to some difficulties in obtaining angler intercepts, biological data and samples in the region. Although charter mode angler intercept quotas were exceeded, and red snapper otolith quotas have been met, otoliths for gray and vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, and king mackerel among others have been difficult to obtain.

Two new NOAA funded CRPs that attempt to better characterize reef fish fisheries in terms of discards and examine life history components for a number of snapper species in the south Florida, have begun in the last two months. Both projects have at-sea observer components to improve biological data. A third project funded through congress seeks to improve data available to stock assessment scientists for the Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishery in terms of discard mortality, the role of the private boat angler in the fishery. Although just begun (August-September, 2009), the three projects have yielded 61 at-sea observer trips, with more than 3,000 tagged red snapper of which 51 fish have been recaptured. Size information has been obtained for approximately 4,000 released red snapper. The studies have yielded approximately 900 otoliths from a number of reef species. Registration with the state is required for vessels that participate in at-sea studies. To date, 75 vessels are registered.

The EDRP for-hire online logbook started earlier this year. Thus far, 46 vessels are registered for participation in the weekly web-based reporting system. Eligible vessels are located in the Florida panhandle, SW Florida and the Florida Keys. Of the registered vessels, only a small number have provided trip level data, which has made random selection of participating vessels for at-sea validation difficult. The study will conduct a follow-up mailing in November to boost the level of participation.

As part of NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Improvement Program (MRIP), FWC conducted a pilot study to characterize the Florida Highly Migratory Species (HMS) fishery in South Florida. The study was completed in July 2009. The study's findings supported the assertion although the MRFSS provides catch estimates for HMS, it may not be effective for all species and that swordfish harvest is underestimated using catch reported in the automated reporting system (ALRS).

Alabama Report: C. Denson

Biological Section

- Using Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP) funds, ADCNR/State Lands Division has secured a contract with a firm to restore approximately 16 acres of marsh along 5000' of eroded shoreline west of the Bayou La Batre ship channel in Mississippi Sound. Sediment will be dredged from nearby areas and planted with appropriate marsh grasses to provide habitat and stabilization. Plans also include the use of wave attenuating devices to protect the new shoreline.
- AMRD closed all public oyster reefs to harvest on March 24, 2009 due to insufficient quantities of legal oysters to support the commercial or recreational fisheries. Reefs are to remain closed until sufficient quantities of oysters are available for the commercial fishery. AMRD is using this time to review current management practices and make adjustments as deemed necessary to rehabilitate and maintain Alabama's oyster reefs. Approximately 300 acres were planted with cultch material in Portersville Bay of Mississippi Sound.
- AMRD implemented a sampling program utilizing oystermen in late March utilizing EDRP funds to assess the recovery efforts to date. Oyster catchers were required to collect samples equivalent to a square meter quadrant and quantify their catch. Sampling continued into June

with few spat present on the main reefs. The western arm of Heron Bay was the only location with small oysters present and spat.

- AMRD continues to work with the Alabama Department of Public Health to monitor water quality in the western portion of Mobile Bay from Fowl River to the Arlington Channel. This effort is required by FDA guidelines as part of a potential oyster relay project for the development of a new reef and to assist the recovery of existing reefs.
- AMRD has met with several state agencies and NGO to discuss oyster gardening programs in state waters. AMRD's primary objections have been the possession of sub-legal oysters (attached to piers) and growing oysters in waters prohibiting harvest with the possibility of being consumed.
- The new Gulf State Park Pier (GSPP) was opened on July 23, 2009 after the original pier was destroyed during hurricane Ivan in 2004. Officially the longest pier in the Gulf, it has drawn over 67,000 fishermen and visitors alike through September 30, 2009. Artificial reefs were placed around the terminus of the pier prior to its opening. This was the first time artificial reefs were used to enhance the angling experience for Gulf State Park Pier fishermen. The old pier was demolished and used to create artificial reefs offshore Alabama.
- AMRD took possession of its saltwater pipeline upon completion of the GSPP. This pipeline supplies high salinity water from the Gulf of Mexico to the Claude Peteet Mariculture Center allowing for the potential future research of Gulf fishes. The original intake system was destroyed by Hurricane Ivan in 2004.
- Beginning September 1, 2009, all Alabama recreation saltwater fishing licenses are issued and stored electronically. This was done so that Alabama would meet compliance requirements of the National Angler Registry.
- AMRD staff continued to participate in dockside and for-hire effort surveys within the NMFS' Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistical Survey. Between March 1 and Sept. 27, 2009, staff members have collected 1,876 interviews from shore, charter, and private/rental boat anglers; this is 13% over the cumulative quota for Waves 2-5, with a full month of data collection remaining in Wave 5. Interview quotas were exceeded in all modes for all waves by an average of 24.8% (not including Wave 5).
- AMRD staff continued collecting biological data via the Biological Sampling Program. Through August 2009, staff member have collected 1,043 otoliths for the priority species identified through the Fisheries Information Network (FIN). Otolith collections of recreationally harvested gray triggerfish and greater amberjack and commercially harvested striped mullet were well below target levels. Issues pertaining to availability for these three species were identified to explain why collections were not meeting targets. Striped mullet roe season will begin at the end of October so fish should be more abundant in local seafood dealers from which to sample.

- Alabama seafood dealers continued use of the electronic trip ticket system to report seafood landings. For fiscal year 2009 thirty-three percent (33%) of licensed seafood dealers who reported landings used the electronic reporting system. Landings from these dealers comprised seventy-four percent (74%) of the total volume of landings.
- A red drum stock assessment is under review and will be available soon. Southern flounder is the next species scheduled for a stock assessment.
- AMRD staff participated in the Alabama Outdoor Expo April 30 - May 1 in Birmingham, Alabama. Staff from the biological and enforcement sections organized interactive displays consisting touch tanks and ice tables as well equipment used during daily operations. Video feeds, children activities, and educational displays were also part of the AMRD exhibit. An estimated 5,000 people attended the Expo.
- AMRD is working with an engineering and design firm (HDR, Inc) to produce plans for a new wet laboratory. The new facility will replace the existing 36 year old lab.
- AMRD hired four biologists in April to fill positions vacated by recent departures and retirements.

Enforcement Section

- The Alabama Legislature passed a bill requiring food service establishments to inform customers of the country of origin of food products. This requirement may be satisfied by placing a disclaimer on the menu or a placard 8 ½ x 11 in close proximity to their health rating.
- The Enforcement Section's public outreach efforts have continued with numerous meetings with commercial, recreational and charter fishermen organizations.
- AMRD continued to expand the Coast Watch Program Community Policing Program. This program is co-sponsored by the Coastal Conservation Association. The program trains citizens to be the eyes and ears of the Enforcement Section to provide information to enforcement of observations of violations. Three training sessions were held this year to increase the number of Coast Watch members. The information they have provided has led directly to the arrests of several conservation violators.
- All AMRD officers received ruggedized laptop computers, printers and drivers license scanners for use in their vehicles and vessels. These computers will be used for NCIC checks, instant notification of complaints, weekly and daily reports, and other needs.
- AMRD, in conjunction with the University of Alabama and the Administrative Office of Courts, has developed an electronic e-citation program. The defendant's copy of the electronic citations is printed at the time of issuance in the field and the citation information is transmitted electronically to the court system. Among other items, the system captures the GPS location of all violations and warnings. This information will assist in the planning of patrols to address problem areas.

- The Enforcement Section began using a new computer reporting and fleet management system on September 26, 2009. This is a web based reporting system for Conservation Officer weekly reports and fleet management information. The system will allow better compilation of the fuel usage and cost in a real time format as well as provide increased analytics of enforcement data collected from officer's patrols.
- The Enforcement Section has begun the installation of cameras for the Marine Resources Coastal Remote Monitoring System. The system will place up to 30 high quality cameras at different locations throughout the coastal Alabama areas. The video will be available through a web based portal and will be accessible to officers in the field via a wireless internet connection. Not only will the officers be able to access the video they will be able to manipulate the camera through a web interface. The video will be stored for up to three weeks on secure servers and will time and date stamped for use as evidence. The sensors will include CCTV, thermal, and inferred cameras.
- A regulation has been promulgated that brings our current "Saltwater Fish, Creel, Bag, Possession, and Size Limits" in line with federal regulations concerning the size limit for commercial red grouper, and the size limit for recreational bonnet head sharks. This regulation also removes the size limit for commercial sharks. This regulation brings the creel limits for bonnet head sharks and recreational grouper in line with changes made to the federal regulations.
- A regulation has been promulgated that requires all fish be landed with head and fins intact, regardless of where they were taken. Sharks, swordfish and tuna can be landed in the form allowed by federal regulations.
- A regulation has been promulgated that makes changes to the "Use of Gill Nets and Harvest of Mullet" regulation. This regulation makes it illegal to display an invalid gill net placard, closes certain areas to the use of gill nets, requires all gill nets and seines to have floats at no greater than prescribed intervals, and prohibits the possession of recreational gill nets more than 300 feet from shore.

Mississippi Report: K. Cuevas

Shrimp and Crab Bureau

Mississippi shrimp season opened south of the Intracoastal Waterway on June 25 at 6:00 a.m.; 230 vessels were counted shrimping. Mississippi waters north of the Intracoastal Waterway opened July 7. Two hundred and twelve vessels were counted shrimping Mississippi waters on this second opening. These low numbers are indicative of the many hardships of the shrimping industry, which this year include low shrimp numbers, poor prices due to cheap imported shrimp, fuel costs and loss of historical infrastructure support. It was the latest season opening on record for the state and the fewest participants which just 10 years ago were over 1000.

The DMR Shrimp & Crab Bureau is partnering with the MS Gulf Coast National Heritage Area (MGCNHA) and MS-AL Sea Grant Consortium to record oral histories as an educational video to tell the story of Mississippi's seafood industry. On-going interviews of local fishing

community icons began in November 2008. The video should be finalized and distributed in fall 2009. (DVD may be shown at the GSMFC Meeting per Ginny Herring, pers. com.).

Production of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Profiles Series documentary has been completed. The 30-minute show is narrated by Lou Gossett, Jr. and first air September 23 on the Discovery Channel

DMR is currently developing an Endangered Species Act Section 6 Agreement Application Package for submission to NOAA Fisheries to promote better cooperation on the conservation of threatened and endangered marine species for the state.

The MS Crab Task Force will meet late September to work on the upcoming 2010 MS Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program, tentatively set for late January 2010. The Mississippi crab trap cleanup program has received a \$31,000 grant from the Fish America Foundation in partnership with the Brunswick Public Foundation and the NOAA Restoration Center for Community-based Habitat Restoration. To date, through the cooperative efforts of all agency partners, volunteers and fishermen, over 18,000 derelict traps have been removed and recycled.

In November (date TBA), DMR and partners will hold the fourth in a series of seminars with the goal of enhancing familiarity between interested groups and increasing awareness of the programs, needs and opportunities that are relevant to marine research of MS waters. "Invasive Species on the Mississippi Coast" will be the subject of the seminar. The previous seminar, "Harmful Algal Blooms" was held July 31, 2009.

Shellfish Bureau

A Norovirus workshop was held June 2nd at the MDMR Bolton Building in Biloxi. Participants included MDMR Shellfish Bureau, FDA, DEQ and Mississippi Public Health Officials and the Mississippi Hospitality Association. The meeting was held to discuss better communication methods in the event of a norovirus outbreak.

Lease Holders: One lease holder deposited 134.26 tons of #57 limestone on their 100 acre lease as part of the EDRP I oyster farming restoration program in July.

Personnel attended harmful algal blooms (HABs) training in St Petersburg on June 1st. Sampling procedures have been established in conjunction with the Phytoplankton Monitoring Network (PMN). This is a cooperative volunteer networking program sponsored by NOAA for monitoring algal blooms.

Oyster reef Monitoring and Assessment: Square meter dives and 1 minute dredge tows were sampled on the various commercial oyster reefs as part of our continuous reef monitoring program. The dive samples were expedited by the help of the MDMR Marine Patrol Dive Team as part of their dive training.

Artificial Reef Bureau

During this period, the Artificial Reef Bureau deployed approximately 20,000 cubic yards of crushed concrete and lime stone on 21 inshore reef sites in the three coastal counties. The

inshore reefs are located near boat ramps for fishermen utilizing small boats, around piers for pier fisherman and near shore for wade fishermen.

There has been one steel hull vessel, 6 loads of concrete culverts and 230 Goliath Reef Balls deployed on Mississippi's offshore reefs. EDRP funds were used for both the inshore and offshore reef restorations/enhancements.

We are working with Omega Protein to sink a 176 foot poggy boat "The Great Wicomico". Final environmental cleaning is currently being conducted and is scheduled to be deployed sometime in October.

Finfish Bureau

The data for the charterboat and commercial finfish recovery report programs for EDRP I and EDRP II is being verified and reviewed so assessments can be made. Fisheries personnel participated in a Casting for Conservation kids fishing tournament on Sept. 12 at River Park in Pascagoula with over 100 kids participating. Personnel assisted with fish identification, knot tying, casting, boat and water safety, and bait distribution. These tournaments utilize EDRP II public outreach funds.

New recreational fishing records for August-September of 2009.

Conventional Fishing Tackle:

Atlantic Sharpnose Shark 10lbs. 4.16 oz.

Finetooth Shark 22 lbs. 9.66 oz.

Fly-fishing Tackle:

Remora 2 lbs. 13.76 oz.

Vermillion Snapper 2 lbs. 5.12 oz.

Yellowfin Tuna 13 lbs. 12.96 oz.

Lane Snapper 1 lb. 0.88 oz.

Greater Amberjack 26 lbs. 7.36 oz.

King Mackerel 27 lbs. 6.4 oz.

Atlantic Sharpnose Shark 10 lbs. 6.24 oz.

Tripletail 16 lbs. 11.84 oz.

Blacktip Shark 55 lbs. 0.32 oz.

Spinner Shark 106 lbs. 0.8 oz.

Rock Hind 1 lb 5.44 oz.

Louisiana Report: K. Foote

Hurricane Recovery Programs

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is still actively engaged in hurricane damage assessment and recovery following Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike. In the wake of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the Department has identified funds within the first EDRP grant to reprogram into cooperative research to monitor recovery of the fishing industries. A survey of commercial harvesters and wholesale/retail dealers has been developed to help characterize the long-term effects of the hurricanes on their operations. Those include the types of effects, and the costs associated with repair or replacement and lost revenues. The purpose of this survey is to help understand the fisheries recovery factors that need to be addressed, and in what priority, after a catastrophic event.

Finfish

Louisiana opened and closed recreational red snapper season with creel and size limits consistent with Federal regulations.

Louisiana established rules for harvest of shark consistent with those in EEZ waters. However, commercial state-permitted shark harvesters would be allowed 33 Large Coastal Shark per vessel, with one trip per day. Likewise, federally-permitted vessels would be limited to one trip per day (not limited in Federal regulations).

Louisiana established rules for harvest of gray triggerfish and greater amberjack that are consistent with those in EEZ waters.

Louisiana continues to examine the life history and fisheries characteristics of species that are experiencing increasing harvest pressures with new regulations (such as gray and vermillion snappers).

The Artificial Reef Program continues to assess and permit reef deployments related to oil and gas structures. The Artificial Reef Program has been very active in accepting new structures into previously permitted Artificial Reef sites. Also, the Program is in the process of re-evaluating its program of Special Artificial Reef Sites (SARS) to ensure clarity of purpose and consistent application and evaluation of sites. Development of inshore artificial reefs in Lake Pontchartrain is in the planning stages, using bridge rubble from the hurricane-damaged I-10 bridge. Planning is also ongoing to enhance other inshore artificial reefs in the Lake Pontchartrain and Terrebonne Parish areas using limestone (Terrebonne Parish) and reef balls (L. Pontchartrain).

The LDWF is collaborating with Southeastern Louisiana University to examine the genetic structure of red drum and spotted seatrout populations within Louisiana's bay systems.

Oyster

The LDWF Oyster Program has recently completed several important management initiatives. In May and June 2009, approximately 500 acres of public oyster reefs were rehabilitated in five areas of the public oyster grounds with approximately 65,000 cubic yards of cultch material (limestone). These projects were funded by NOAA federal disaster programs through the

GSMFC and have proven successful as oyster spat sets have been documented through biological sampling of these rehabilitated reefs. Additionally, approximately 40,000 acres of Mississippi Sound is being side-scanned to identify and map shrimp and oyster habitat. Lastly, the oyster season on the public grounds was recently opened (September 9) and heavy oyster harvest was documented on public oyster reefs which had been previously rehabilitated with cultch material back in 2007. Despite successful harvest on these rehabilitated reefs, annual oyster stock assessment sampling on additional public reefs in July 2009 showed a slim resource throughout much of the public oyster areas.

Shrimp/Crab

Marine debris removal efforts continue in coastal Louisiana focusing on the fishing grounds. Four hundred square miles of coastal waterbottoms in Breton Sound, Lake Pontchartrain Middle Grounds, Lake St Catherine, Calcasieu Lake and Vermilion/Cote Blanche Bays and Barataria/Caminada Bays have been cleaned of debris through the Department's contract with Crowder-Gulf Joint Venture. LDWF continues to work with the LA Recovery Authority (LRA), the LA Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) and Governors Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP), federal agencies and local and parish officials and community and fishing organizations to identify the locations of underwater obstructions which are fouling the fishing grounds or access channels used by fishing vessels.

The Crustacean Program anticipates greatly increasing samples within portions of Breton and Chandeleur Sounds to complement current SEAMAP sampling.

Governor Jindal created the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force by Executive Order on August 31. Task Force membership is drawn from executive staff from the offices of the Governor and Attorney General, the departments of Wildlife and Fisheries, Health and Hospitals, Agriculture and Forestry, Economic Development, the Louisiana Recovery Authority and Workforce Commission, and representatives of the shrimp industry. They are charged with examining the Louisiana shrimp industry as a whole, identifying areas of concern or problems endemic to the industry, and developing plans or proposing policies which can improve the economic sustainability of the industry. The Crustacean Program has also been heavily involved in facilitating proceedings of the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force and those of the Shrimp Harvester and Shrimp Processor Advisory Panels to the task force.

Rulemaking procedures have been initiated which would expand the current window by which businesses operating under a "Special Live Bait Dealers Permit" may take live shrimp and live croaker during closed shrimp season.

Rulemaking procedures have been initiated which would establish a 10 day crab trap closure in a portion of the upper Barataria Basin for purposes of removing abandoned crab traps.

Data Management

Gulfin programs (MRFSS, Biological Sampling, Trip Tickets) are going along as expected. However, insufficient funding for 2010 will require us to drop biological sampling.

We've developed, tested and are now distributing an electronic reporting system for the recreational for-hire industry. Use of the electronic reporting system is voluntary and provided free to anyone that wants to use it. At this time approximately 25 copies have been distributed.

Research

Our new Fisheries Research Laboratory on Grand Isle opened for business on July 1, 2009. The 23 million dollar state of the art facility will be used to conduct research needed by the department and provide a platform for cooperative research with universities.

Habitat

The Corps completed closure of the MRGO in July. Work continues on the restoration plan for the surrounding area, including the modeling effort for the Violet diversion.

Texas Report: J. Membretti

Regulatory Issues

License / Fees Increases

In late May, TPWD Commissioners approved increases to hunting and fishing licenses, as well as boat titling and registration fees. Most fees were increased by five percent, and all increases took effect on 1 September 2009.

Regulation Changes

Guides who utilize paddle crafts (canoes, kayaks) in salt water now have a new license option, an All-Water Paddle Craft Guide License. A person may qualify for this license by completing an approved series of kayak training courses, along with CPR/First Aid, and a TPWD boater safety course. A Paddle Craft guide who does not utilize motorized vessels is not required to have a U.S. Coast Guard Operator's License.

New saltwater fishing regulations that took effect on 1 September 2009:

For flounder, the recreational daily bag limit decreased from 10 to 5 fish, and the commercial bag limit from 60 to 30 fish. During the month of November, hook and line anglers will be permitted to take 2 flounder per day, with take by all other gears is prohibited. Possession limit cannot exceed the daily bag limit.

For sharks, the minimum total length for most species increased from 24 inches to 64 inches. However, the minimum for Atlantic sharpnose, Blacktip, and Bonnethead sharks remain at 24 inches total length. A prohibited list was established for the 21 species: Atlantic angel, Basking, Bigeye sand tiger, Bigeye sixgill, Bigeye thresher, Bignose, Caribbean reef, Caribbean sharpnose, Dusky, Galapagos, Longfin mako, Narrowtooth, Night, Sandbar, Sand tiger, Sevengill, Silky, Sixgill, Smalltail, Whale, and White. For allowable shark species, the bag limit remains one shark per person per day, with a two shark possession limit.

Limits changed for the following species, with possession limit set at twice the daily bag limit: For greater amberjack, the minimum total length changed from 32 inches to 34 inches. Gray triggerfish now have a minimum total length of 16 inches and a daily bag limit of 20 fish per

person. Gag grouper have a minimum total length of 22 inches and a daily bag limit of 2 fish per person.

Menhaden Total Allowable Catch

In 2008, the TPW Commission established a total allowable catch (TAC) limit on gulf menhaden caught in the Texas Territorial Sea and commercially landed in Louisiana. The TAC went into effect on 1 September 2008 and was set at the previous 5-year (2002-2006) average of 31.5 million pounds per year. The 2009 fishing season is the first fishing season this regulation applies. As of 27 September 2009, 225 sets had been made in Texas waters landing 13.7 million pounds, which represents 43.4% of the Texas TAC.

Coastal Fisheries Programs & Projects

Life History Research – PRBMFRS

Otolith and gonad samples were collected for alligator gar from the Cedar Lakes area for a preliminary reproductive biology study.

Gray snapper samples were collected and processed for a life history study.

Routine otolith collections from red drum caught in gill net samples continues.

The GSMFC funded FIN-Biological Sampling project for otolith collection and processing for various marine species was continued.

PRBMFRS Genetics Research for GSMFC's Technical Coordinating Committee

Fin clip sample collection and processing for southern flounder and alligator gar genetic variation studies are continuing.

A cooperative effort with Texas A&M University at Galveston, involving the confirmation of species identification for snook species collected in Texas waters, was completed.

Red drum fin clip collections for a genetics project conducted by Dr. John Gold, Texas A&M University is continuing.

Species identification was conducted on shrimp provided by NOAA law enforcement to determine if truth in labeling regulations were followed by seafood wholesalers.

Planning for a project to track oyster disease severity using Quantitative Real-time Polymerase Chain Reaction was conducted.

Artificial Reef Project

TPWD completed 4 reefing projects with Resolve Marine Services through a settlement agreement for the Texas Clipper ship project. Projects included: 1) Cleaning the tugboat *Coschecton* of all hazardous materials and reefing the vessel at a TPWD nearshore reef site in Port Mansfield; 2) reefing over 800 concrete culverts around the *Coschecton* tugboat; and 3) reefing over 2,400 tons of concrete bridge materials from the Humble Channel Bridge at the

TPWD Matagorda Island reef site. The cost of these projects to TPWD was \$450,000, but valued at over \$1 million value.

The list of petroleum companies that are interested in reefing at TPWD sites continues to grow. In the last six months, 4 petroleum platforms and 6 individual leg sets have been reefed at TPWD artificial reef sites.

A Coastal Impact and Assessment Program grant from Minerals Management Service has been approved and an interagency contract between the GLO and TPWD is being drafted. This 3-year grant totals \$1.5 million and will be used for nearshore reefing projects.

Private groups have begun participation in the nearshore reefing program. Coastal Conservation Association has move concrete and quarry stone to a staging area for deployment at the George Vancouver Liberty Ship reef, offshore Freeport, and REEFMAN, LLC deployed 15 engineered reefs at the same site.

Seventy five 1-ton quarry blocks were reefed at Sabine Reef making this the first materials placed at the site since it has been permitted many years ago.

Discussions with the US Navy on planning the uprighting of the Texas Clipper ship have ended. The ship is functioning well as a reef and may serve out the rest of its time on its side. Biological monitoring on the ship continues through a contract with UT-Brownsville.

Buyback Programs

Inshore Shrimp Buyback Program

Inshore shrimp buyback round # 24 application period closed on March 13, 2009; it was open for approximately 45 days. During this round, 64 individual bids were received and a total of 35 (17 bay and 18 bait) licenses were purchased at a total cost of \$275,540. The average purchase price was \$7,873.

Shrimp - Overall totals since 1996

- 2,013 licenses purchased
- 1,013 bay licenses and 1000 bait licenses
- Total cost of \$13.2 million
- Average price over all rounds = \$6,557
- 2,013 / 3,231 original licenses = 62%

Crab Buyback Program

Crab buyback round #10 application period closed on March 13, 2009 during which 10 applications were received and 2 licenses were accepted at a total cost of \$18,000 and an average cost of \$9,000.

Crab - Overall totals since 2001

- 42 licenses purchased
- Total cost of \$2,42,049
- Average price over all rounds = \$5,763
- 42 / 287 original licenses = 15% of total

Finfish Buyback Program

Finfish buyback round #13 application period closed on March 13, 2009 during which 21 applications received and 14 licenses were accepted at a total cost of \$109,850 and an average of \$7,846.

Finfish - Overall totals since 2002

- 204 licenses purchased
- Total cost of \$1,100,650
- Average price over all rounds = \$5,395
- 204 / 549 original licenses = 37%

Fish Stocking Efforts

In mid-May, Coastal Fisheries made history when Sea Center Texas staff stocked about 760 southern flounder in Old River Bayou, Bridge City. Although TPWD has stocked southern flounder a few times in Aransas Bay, this is the first time TPWD has spawned, incubated, raised, and stocked its own southern flounder.

2009 Production Totals

Red Drum = 11,765,416

Spotted Seatrout = 2,574,909

Flounder = 4,335

Oysters

In mid-August, Coastal Fishery's Oyster Mapping and Restoration Team began oyster reef restoration efforts in Galveston Bay. After collecting and assessing side scan sonar/ bathymetry data of a proposed restoration site, they marked the corners of the project's desired 20-acre site in East Bay. A total of nine barges, each carrying approximately 2,000 tons (over 12,000 cubic yards) of cultch material were evenly deployed at the site. Staff also completed Phase I of a community-based oyster habitat restoration project in Galveston Bay. Ten small pads totaling 2.5 acres were constructed along the San Leon shoreline in close proximity to private piers to enhance fishery habitat along the shoreline. Funding for this project came from a USFWS Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership grant and TPWD Kills & Spills restitution funds.

Also in mid-August, staff met with oyster leaseholders to discuss transplant dates and new regulations. A report on the Vibrio Management Plan, and its impact on the oyster industry, was given by the Health Department. Beginning next summer, the harvest of oysters for the half-shell market will be under rigorous controls that will change the dynamics of this fishery. A meeting is planned for October 2009 to discuss Vessel Monitoring Systems as an option for allowing harvest before sunrise when water temperatures are lower which would aid commercial oyster leaseholders in meeting time-temperature controls.

Inshore Shrimp

Coastwide aerial inshore shrimp boat counts taken on May 14th and 15th totaled 179 vessels, up from last year's count of 65 vessels but below the 15-year average of 435 vessels.

Coastwide opening day bay shrimp boat counts conducted on August 15th and 16th counted a total of 197 boats, which is the largest opening day count since 2006 (213), but below the 15-year

average of 576. Marine diesel is about half the cost from this time last year, but shrimp prices were down. At the time, jumbo shrimp's wholesale price was \$0.65/lbs.

Turtles

On 27 July 2009, Donna Shaver at Padre Island National Seashore reported a record 196 nestings of Kemp's Ridley sea turtles were counted on Texas beaches, one more than the previous record of 195 set last year. This year in Texas, 117 nestings have been reported at Padre Island National Seashore, far more than any other Texas location. However, turtle nestings have also been reported at spots like South Padre Island (33), Boca Chica Beach (9), Matagorda Island (7), San Jose Island (4), Brazoria County (3), Galveston Island (3), and other locations.

Special Efforts, Studies, and Topics

The North Deer Island Restoration and Protection project was awarded the Coastal America Award for 2009. This is the only coastal stewardship award administered by the President's Office. North Deer Island is the largest colonial waterbird rookery on the Upper Texas Coast. Up to 30,000 pairs of birds nest on the island annually, including the endangered brown pelican. The project armored over 7,000 feet of shoreline with limestone to prevent ongoing erosion and restored 10 acres of the island's marshes and rookery habitat.

In August 2009, Coastal Fisheries' Hazardous Algae Bloom Response Team reported a red tide occurred just offshore of South Padre Island. Participants in a Texas International Fishing Tournament complained of eye/nose/throat irritations when they were just a few miles offshore from Port Isabel. A NOAA bulletin indicated a high chlorophyll in that area at that time. In mid-September, increasing numbers of *Karenia brevis* were observed in Port Aransas and streaks of discolored water were observed in Corpus Christi Bay, and fishermen reported a fish kill in the upper Laguna Madre. In mid-October samples confirmed the presence of *Karenia brevis* along South Padre Island.

'Others'

In mid-June, experts representing government, university, private and non-profit organizations gathered in Corpus Christi to review 10 years of work in public and boater education, scientific research, and management actions to protect seagrasses. TPWD, Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, and Port of Corpus Christi Authority jointly hosted the workshop that took a comprehensive look at the accomplishments of the Seagrass Conservation Plan for Texas, created in 1999. Attendees identified goals that have been achieved and brainstormed new goals for the plan.

Collaboration between the Coastal Fisheries and TPWD GIS Lab's Resource Information System (RIS) team resulted in a new online Texas Tarpon Observation Network application (<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/maps/gis/ris/tarpon/index.phtml>). The new Web resource is the first of its kind for the Gulf of Mexico. The intent is to use angler observations to help monitor tarpon occurrences along the Texas coast, augment past and current tarpon research along the coast, and help raise awareness of the popular gamefish. The new Web application creates a means for TPWD staff and external customers to query the number and type of tarpon observations using dates, radius from a point based on latitude and longitude, bay name, or

coastal area. The application features Google™ Maps allowing for satellite-based layer imagery, and the ability to zoom in, zoom out, and pan to locations of interest.

LiveFuels, Inc., a Texas company located on the Arroyo Aquaculture Association complex in Arroyo City, is attempting to develop a renewable diofuel from algae-fed fish. While current approaches to generating algal-biofuels are resource intensive and face fundamental science and engineering hurdles, LiveFuels' approach is ingenious in its simplicity. By turning natural food chains into productive systems, LiveFuels eliminates many of the costs and risks plaguing other approaches to using algae for biofuels.

Ross Melinchuk has been selected to lead the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's natural resource divisions (Coastal Fisheries, Inland Fisheries, and Wildlife) as Deputy Executive Director for Natural Resources. The Deputy Executive Director for Natural Resources position was created by TPWD's executive director to bring additional scientific, natural resource management and conservation policy expertise to the table to help lead agency divisions facing large-scale conservation challenges that include water resources for people and wildlife, invasive species, climate change, declining and fragmented fish and wildlife habitats, evolving outdoor recreation trends, and others.

In August, a Baytown man died from an infection caused by exposure to *Vibrio vulnificus*. Thomas Shurley, 52, died multiple organ failure following a three-week battle against the infection. He had suffered a scrape on his knee while fishing in Galveston Bay. The bacteria rapidly spread throughout his body, and even the amputation of his leg could not stop it.

This most-viewed video on the TPWD's YouTube channel so far is "TAKE ME FISHING 101: Basic Gear Assembly." The video shows step-by-step how to assemble a fishing rod and tackle. It's one of 11 short videos covering every aspect of how to get started fishing. TPWD other social outlets are Twitter, Facebook and Flickr.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Report: R. Crabtree

(A copy of the report was supplied to the TCC members but not presented during the meeting)
Sustainable Fisheries

Fishery Openings and Closings and Quota Monitoring Summary

(The following recreational landings and percentages are based only on the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey for January through June 2009, and do not include headboat or Texas landings.)

Shrimp: The Texas Closure was in effect from May 15 through July 15 for 2009. Because of continued declining effort in the shrimp fishery, no time-area closures were needed to reduce red snapper bycatch.

Recreational Red Snapper: Federal waters opened June 1 and closed August 15, 2009. Through June, 1.66 million pounds (mp) were landed of the 2.45 mp quota (68 percent).

Commercial Red Snapper: Through September 30, 2009, 78 percent of the 2.55 mp quota had been harvested. 2009 allocations were issued to 524 accounts.

Recreational King Mackerel: 1.29 mp whole weight of the 6.94 mp allocation (19 percent) was landed through June.

Commercial King Mackerel: The 2009-2010 fishing year for the Gulf migratory group of king mackerel began on July 1, 2009. The 1.01 mp quota for the western Gulf of Mexico as met and the fishery was closed on September 12, 2009. Through September, very few landings have occurred in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. Beginning November 1, the boundary between the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic groups of king mackerel will shift from the southwest coast of Florida to the northeast coast of Florida. The southern sub-zone gillnet fishery will open on January 19, 2010.

Recreational Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish: Through June, 0.938 mp whole weight of the 1.368 mp greater amberjack quota (69 percent) had been landed. For gray triggerfish, 261,007 pounds (lb) whole weight, or 73 percent of 356,000 lb catch target had been landed.

Commercial Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish: Through September 15, 2009, approximately 37 percent of the greater amberjack quota and 50 percent of the gray triggerfish quota had been landed. A commercial closure for greater amberjack will be in effect from March 1 through May 31, 2010.

Recreational Gag and Red Grouper: For gag, 0.748 mp gutted weight, or 36 percent of 2.06 mp catch target had been landed through June. For red grouper, 0.361 mp, or 20 percent of 1.82 mp catch target had been landed. Recreational fishing for shallow water grouper will be closed February 1 through March 31 in 2010.

Commercial Shallow Water Grouper (SWG): Through September 15, 2009, 52 percent of the 7.48 mp SWG quota was landed; 64 percent of the 5.75 mp red grouper quota was landed, and 36 percent of the 1.32 mp gag quota had been landed. To reduce sea turtle takes, longlining for SWG was closed in the eastern Gulf of Mexico (east of Cape San Bias, Florida) inshore of the 50 fathom contour on May 18, 2009, through emergency rulemaking effective until October 28, 2009.

Commercial Deep Water Grouper (DWG and Tilefish: The 440,000 lb commercial quota for tilefish was met on May 15, and the fishery closed. The 1.02 mp quota for DWG was met on June 27, and the fishery closed. With the closure of the DWG component of the fishery, longlining for reef fish in the eastern Gulf of Mexico was prohibited through the emergency rulemaking discussed above.

Permits Status

The following represents permits issued or renewed within the last 12 months, which can be used to fish in the appropriate fishery. It does not represent activity in the fishery, nor include permits which have expired but are renewable. Active permits as of October 1, 2009:

- 1,576 moratorium Gulf shrimp permits and 286 royal red shrimp endorsements
- 1,298 for-hire coastal pelagic moratorium permits; 39 historical captain permits
- 1,459 commercial king mackerel moratorium permits (includes South Atlantic)
(21 commercial king mackerel gillnet)

- 1,575 commercial Spanish mackerel permits (includes South Atlantic)
- 1,272 for-hire reef fish moratorium permits; 38 historical captain permits
- 869 commercial reef fish moratorium permits
- 169 commercial spiny lobster permits and 331 tailing permits (includes South Atlantic)

Amendment Status

Reef Fish Amendment 29: This amendment establishes a multi-species individual fishing quota (IFQ) for the Gulf of Mexico commercial grouper and tilefish component of the reef fish fishery. The IFQ was approved in a referendum vote among eligible reef fish permit holders, with 81 percent of all votes cast being in favor of the IFQ. The Council approved Amendment 29 for review by the Secretary of Commerce at its January 2009 meeting. The final rule implementing the IFQ was published August 31, 2009. The IFQ is scheduled to begin January 1, 2010.

Reef Fish Amendment 30B: Amendment 30B includes actions to end overfishing of gag, increase red grouper harvest and reduce discards, and establish sector specific annual catch limits and accountability measures for these two species. Among other actions, the final rule, effective May 18, 2009, established a 2-fish recreational bag limit for gag, a 2-fish recreational bag limit for red grouper, an overall 4-fish aggregate grouper bag limit, and extended the recreational closure to start February 1 and run through March 31. The commercial minimum size limit for red grouper was reduced from 20 inches to 18 inches total length to reduce discards. Another rulemaking, published June 24, 2009, established a January through April closure to all bottom fishing in an area called "The Edges"; this will replace the commercial February 15-March 15 closure for SWG.

Reef Fish Amendment 31: The intended effect of Amendment 31 is to reduce the take of sea turtles by the bottom longline component of the reef fish fishery. Actions in the amendment include a seasonal area closure for bottom longlines fished in the eastern Gulf of Mexico, a restriction that would allow continued participation by only those longline vessels that have a substantial historical activity in the reef fish fishery, and a restriction on the amount of longline gear that can be fished. Pending final staff editing, the draft environmental impact statement should be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency in early October, and a proposed rule by November. A final rule could be effective by late March 2010. NOAA Fisheries Service anticipates developing separate rulemaking to allow the bottom longline component of the fishery to re-open, with certain restrictions, until the final regulations for Amendment 31 become effective.

Generic Aquaculture Fishery Management Plan (FMP): This action would establish a regional permitting process for regulating and promoting environmentally-sound and economically-sustainable aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico exclusive economic zone, consistent with the goals of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). The Council approved the FMP for submission and review by the Secretary at its January 2009 meeting. In accordance with provisions of the MSA, the FMP was approved on September 2, 2009.

Protected Resources

Biological Opinions

- Completed a biological opinion for the Navy regarding Channel Dredging and Homeporting of Surface Ships at Naval Station Mayport, Duval County, Florida, and its impact on listed species.
- Completed a biological opinion for the Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers (COE) regarding Restoration Activities on Bird Island in Lake Worth Lagoon in Palm Beach County, Florida, and its impact on Johnson's seagrass.
- Completed a biological opinion for the Jacksonville District COE regarding the Juno Beach Nourishment Project in Palm Beach County, Florida, and its impact on green sea turtles and smalltooth sawfish.
- Completed a biological opinion for the Jacksonville District CUE regarding a Pier Extension in the Gulf of Mexico, Bay County, Florida, and its impact on Gulf sturgeon, Gulf sturgeon critical habitat, smalltooth sawfish, and sea turtles.
- Completed a biological opinion for the Jacksonville District CUE regarding a Pier Construction in Panama City Beach, Bay County, Florida, and its impact on Gulf sturgeon, Gulf sturgeon critical habitat, smalltooth sawfish, and sea turtles.
- Completed a biological opinion for the Jacksonville District COE regarding a Seawall Repair and Dock Construction in Miami-Dade County, Florida, and its impact on Johnson seagrass.
- Completed a biological opinion for the Jacksonville District COE regarding the North Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant Ocean Outfall Cover Rehabilitation in Pompano Beach, Broward County, Florida, and its impact on listed species.
- Completed a biological opinion for the Jacksonville District CUE regarding a Dock Construction in Miami-Dade County, Florida, and its impact on Johnson's seagrass.
- Completed a biological opinion for the Mobile District CUE regarding Reconstruction of the Biloxi Coliseum Pier in Mississippi Sound, Biloxi, Harrison County, Mississippi, and its impact on Gulf sturgeon, Gulf sturgeon critical habitat, smalltooth sawfish, and sea turtles.
- Completed a biological opinion for the Federal Highway Administration regarding the proposed replacement of the Southern Boulevard Bridge and tide relief bridge, Intracoastal Waterway, Lake Worth Lagoon, Palm Beach County, Florida, and its impact on Johnson's seagrass and critical habitat.
- Completed a biological opinion regarding Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Permit for the Acroporapalmate Offshore Nursery and Restoration Research Project.
- Completed a biological opinion for the New Orleans District COE regarding installation of two breakwaters in Lake Pontchartrain providing 100-year-level storm protection for the City

of New Orleans and Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, and its impact on Gulf sturgeon critical habitat.

- Completed a biological opinion regarding continued authorization of fishing under the Fishery Management Plan for the Stone Crab Fishery in the Gulf of Mexico, and its impact on listed species.

Conservation Measures

- Completed the final Gulf Sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*) 5-Year Status Review.
- Completed the draft copy of the Smalitooth Sawfish (*Pristispectinata* Latham) 5-Year Status Review.
- Issued several Stranding Agreements authorizing participation in the National Marine Fisheries Service Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, Southeast Region Stranding Network.

Outreach Activities

- Conducted training workshops for the Dolphin SMART program in Alabama, with sponsoring partners, and continued implementation of the program in Key West, Florida, with an annual training workshop. There are currently five commercial tour operators as recognized Dolphin SMART participants.
- Attended 2009 National Shrimp Festival in Gulf Shores, Alabama, to raise awareness about the Dolphin SMART program and why it is illegal to feed and harass wild dolphins, as Alabama is a hot-spot for these issues.
- Launched an animated video showing a dolphin addicted to being illegally fed by humans to use as an innovative educational tool concerning the harm feeding causes to dolphin, as well as how the public can help.

Overview of the GMFMC's Outreach & Education Committee and Advisory Panel

C. Ponce presented on the steps that were taken to establish the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Outreach and Education Committee and Advisory Panel. The process started with the hiring of a Public Information Officer in 2005 (Charlene's position). Then in 2008 the Council formed the Outreach & Education Committee and the Outreach & Education Advisory Panel. The Committee was made up of 6-7 Council members and their emphasis was to enhance the Council's O&E and to provide direction/priority on O&E efforts. After the Committee established its goals, the Council decided to establish the Advisory Panel to help the Committee achieve its goals. In February, 2009 the Advisory Panel met to start addressing the Council's outreach & education issues. One thing the Advisory Panel accomplished at this meeting was developing their own charge "Advise the Council's O&E Committee on how to best achieve the communication goals set forth by implementing a strategic plan". The Advisory Panel met again in May and developed its top five recommendations for the Council; the largest

one of these is to develop an education program in the southeast region similar to the Marine Resource Education Program in the northeast.

Discussion of New TCC Fisheries Outreach Subcommittee

The TCC had a long discussion of what the role of the new Subcommittee would be. **J. Shepard** stated that he sees this new Subcommittee as an information sharing group, discussing what each state is doing with regard to outreach and what has and has not worked. **L. Simpson** pointed out that it is possible, if the Marine Resource Education Program gets funded, that the Commission could serve as the administrator of this program and the Outreach Subcommittee could work on achieving the goals of this new program and those of the Commission. **C. Perret** suggested that with any activity this new Subcommittee addresses they should involve Sea Grant because they do a very good job getting information out to the public. This is most likely a result of their close ties the academia. This suggestion was encouraged by many members of the TCC and they pointed out that Sea Grant has both a commercial and recreational fisheries component. Many members pointed out a concern if this new Subcommittee worked closely with the Council's O&E Committee that the Council may push their own issues and our member states may not be in agreement with the Council's position. The TCC also got into a lengthy discussion of what exactly the Marine Resource Education Program was and how it would be carried out if it was established in the Gulf and South Atlantic Region. The outcome of this overall discussion was that the group would look for some way for the members of the new Fisheries Outreach Subcommittee to communicate with each other about what is happening in our member states. This can be accomplished either in a face-to-face meeting or by way of a webinar or conference call.

Marine Debris and Derelict Fishing Gear

N. Parry presented on the current activities of the NOAA Marine Debris Program. He covered NOAA's definition of marine debris and some of the more problematic forms including ghostnets and microplastics. Neal also addressed the three major impacts of marine debris including impacts on human safety and navigation, impacts on economy, and impacts on the environment. He outlined the marine debris projects that have been carried out in the Gulf. Neal also addressed the fact that there is no Gulf region Marine Debris Program Coordinator and urged the Gulf States to raise the issue if they feel that it would be beneficial to have such a position. Neal discussed in detail one of their projects in Hawaii. This project got started because the longline industry there was complaining about debris interactions with their gear. The longline industry agreed to an observer program to monitor these interactions, as a result of observer surveys, a derelict gear disposal & recycling program was established. A collection bin was placed at pier 38, Honolulu Harbor for longliners and the general public to deposit derelict fishing gear at no cost to them. When the bin is filled it is transported to a facility that grinds the content into small pieces and then the ground material is transported to a power plant that combusts it to generate electricity for Honolulu homes. This same program was duplicated in New Bedford, MA in February, 2008. Neal quickly updated the group on the status of the Gulf of Mexico Project that had been going on for the last 3.5 years and highlighted some of the main accomplishments including the development of an emergency response plan entitled "Marine Debris Emergency Response Planning in the North-Central Gulf of Mexico".

Review and Discussion of the IJF Compliance Matrix

S. VanderKooy outlined the reasoning behind the compliance matrix by reading a section from the most recent copy "In order to monitor the implementation of each FMP in the Gulf, it is important to track the progress of each state in adopting laws and/or regulations consistent with the recommendations of the plan. The GSMFC is currently developing such a monitoring procedure. By using a simple matrix form, recommendations for each FMP are listed opposite each state. Each state is then evaluated on its progress toward implementation by the following scores: I = Implemented, NI = Not Implemented, PA = Partially Implemented, PR = Proposed, NA = Not Applicable. Using this procedure states can evaluate their individual progress and that of their sister states in addressing the problems and goals of each region-wide FMP". Steve pointed out that the reason this has come up is in the FMPs they make recommendations for management as well as improvements to data collection of fisheries dependent/independent, economic, and sociological information. These data collection aspects of the FMPs have been overlooked because they do not fall under the realm of the SFFMC. The TCC will begin to review these more technical/scientific recommendations from the IJF program FMP's that are not covered by the SFFMC to help move these along to fully implemented.

A National Fisheries Economic Program for the Regional Commissions

A. Miller gave a presentation on the development of a national economics program for the regional Commissions. The presentation gave an overview of current state and federal fisheries economic data collection mandates and how they are accomplished. He pointed out that state and federally managed fisheries are largely missing a commitment to consistent and long-term coordination and collection of economic data that is made available through an accessible means. Alex concluded the presentation with the benefits of having routine economic data collection activities, what an economic program would look like for the regional Commissions and examples of what is currently in place and being developed at the GSMFC.

Subcommittee Reports

Crab:

T. Wagner gave an update on the rearing efforts going on in Mississippi and Florida. GCRL with help from MSDMR were able to rear two ponds of crabs and restocked 3000-4000 individuals. In Florida they are continuing with the lipofuscin research for aging crabs and preliminary results are looking promising. The Subcommittee also heard updates on the derelict crab trap removal efforts, Florida removed over 3000 traps, Mississippi removed 478, Louisiana removed 788, Texas removed over 1900 and to date over 65,000 have been removed from Gulf of Mexico inshore waters. The Subcommittee also heard state reports from its members and according to those reports commercial hard crab landings showed continued declines from 2006 through 2008. However, preliminary landings data from January to July, 2009 have the Subcommittee optimistic about 2009 landings. Tom pointed out that a cooperative effort between the crab fishery and the MSDMR continues to address accidental catch of diamondback terrapins through voluntary use of crab trap turtle excluder devices (TEDs) being provided free to fishermen. These TEDs are 2" x 6" rectangles of either plastic or stainless material and are installed in the funnels of the traps to prevent terrapins from entering the trap. To date MSDMR

has installed 2,004 TEDs in commercial traps and provided 1,084 TEDs to recreational crabbers. The cost for TEDs is about \$0.36 each. Finally, the Subcommittee re-elected Tom Wagner as their chairman.

D. Diaz made a motion to accept the report and it passed unanimously.

SEAMAP:

J. Rester stated that the Subcommittee discussed the changes that NMFS made to the SEAMAP shrimps/ground fish survey design. These included standardized 30 minute tows, not pulling across all depth stratum, no more day/night stations, and changes to how they select these stations. States have continued to use their same sampling designs that they have used since 1987. The information from the new survey design was sent out to several researchers in the different states to compare it to the old information and they all felt confident that the new information was as good if not better than the old data. As a result, the Subcommittee decided to switch to this new design in 2010. The Subcommittee also heard a presentation from Julie Neer and John Waters on the uses and limitations of SEAMAT data in stock assessments. They also had a discussion of the current SEAMAP sampling by each partner. Lloyd Kirk gave a talk about internet access of SEAMAP data using Oracle Discoverer and mapping software. Joan Shultz gave an update on the polish sorting center where all the plankton samples are sent to separate the ichthyoplankton from the invertebrates. Jeff pointed out that Jim Hanifen was retiring so he would no longer be serving on the Subcommittee. Read Hendon was elected as the new chair of the Subcommittee with Bob McMichael serving as vice chair.

A motion to accept the report was moved by **D. Diaz** and passed without opposition.

K. Foote made a motion to have the TCC write a letter of thanks to Jim Hanifen for his years of service on the SEAMAP Subcommittee and this motion passed unanimously.

Data Management:

R. Cody reported that the Subcommittee had a discussion of the status of biological sampling activities. Some shortfalls for otolith quotas in primary species were noted. There was also a presentation on the status of the commercial vessel information project by Dave Donaldson. A contractor has been hired to compile the vessel information from the states and to identify vessels operating commercially in more than one state, this contractor has already meet with many states and received vessel information. The Subcommittee also had a discussion about log book/trip ticket reconciliation process to clear up discrepancies between them. The Subcommittee agreed that there needed to be a formal process by which data reconciliation could be addressed. The Subcommittee also had a discussion of possible changes to the trip ticket database including the addition of a trip number identifier. The trip ticket IFQ compatibility reconciliation was discussed as well. Beverly Sauls gave an update on the MRIP Gulf of Mexico for-hire logbook project. She talked about the outcome of the for-hire workshop that was held in New Orleans in August, where sets of recommendations and criteria were established that will be used to develop a logbook. The Subcommittee also had a review and approval of the at sea sampling protocols. The group thought it needed more time to review the protocols and did not make any recommendations at this time. Kerwin Cuevas was elected as chair and Chris Denson as vice. In the afternoon there was a special session on the review of commercial data for 2000-

2008 things discussed were species issues, gear issues and any other issues that would affect the data as far as differences between the GSMFC database and the information that states have. All the issues were resolved.

K. Cuevas made a motion to accept the report and it passed unanimously.

Artificial Reef:

J. Ballard reported that the Subcommittee has not meet since the last time he reported to the TCC so there was no formal report. He pointed out that the Subcommittee would be meeting in two weeks in St. Petersburg, FL and this would be a joint meeting with the Atlantic States Subcommittee. James also reported that the Commission received a response from the Navy to the letters sent out after the last TCC meeting concerning the reefing of decommissioned naval ships. This response stated that although the Navy encourages a strong reefing program, they do not have the funding or legislative authority to carry out such a program. James also stated that he has added over 300 new artificial reef journal articles to the "Reef Compiled Data" bibliography database that is accessible on the GSMFC website.

Habitat:

J. Rester stated that the Subcommittee with help from the Artificial Reef Subcommittee has drafted the "Commission Best Management Practices for Inshore Artificial Reefs" document that was discussed at the last TCC meeting. The Habitat Subcommittee made a motion to forward this document to the TCC for review. The TCC chose to have Jeff email a copy of the document to its members for a six week review period following the meeting. The Subcommittee also heard a presentation on the water wars between Alabama, Florida and Georgia. Jeff also covered the details of the Freshwater Inflow Conference that will be held in Texas in February 2010. Jeff gave a presentation to the Subcommittee on a project that the Commission has been working on that outlines suitable sites for offshore aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico. The Subcommittee elected Ron Mezich as the new chairman.

D. Diaz made a motion to accept the report and it passed unanimously.

Election of Officers

D. Diaz moved to nominate Joey Shepard as chair of the TCC and that motion carried unanimously and Joey Shepard chose Kerwin Cuevas to serve as the vice chair.

With no further business to discuss; J. Shepard adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

APPROVED BY:
Virginia Avail
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES – 60th Annual Fall Meeting
Wednesday, October 14, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi**

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

Members

Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Virginia Vail, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Chris Denson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL (*proxy for V. Minton*)
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Larry Simpson, Executive Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Buck Sutter, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL (*proxy for R. Crabtree*)

Others

Pat Burchfield, Gladys Porter Zoo, Brownsville, TX
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Joe Gill, GSMFC Commissioner, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Smith, NMFS, Beaufort Lab, Beaufort, NC
Kirsten Larsen, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Ellie Roche, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Empire, LA
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
Wilson Gaidry, Commissioner, Houma, LA
Mike Travis, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Judy Jamison, Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Tampa, FL
Rick Burris, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff

James Ballard, *Sportfish Restoration/Aquatic Invasives Coordinator*, GSMFC
Gregg Bray, *RecFIN(SE) Programmer/Analyst*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Madeleine Travis, *FIN Staff Assistant*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Joe Ferrer, *Systems Administrator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, *EDRP Program Coordinator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Jeff Rester, *SEAMAP/Habitat Coordinator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, *IJF Program Coordinator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Alex Miller, *Staff Economist*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday, March 18, 2009 in New Orleans, Louisiana and August 19, 2009 in New Orleans, Louisiana were approved as written.

Menhaden Advisory Committee Report

J. Smith of NMFS Beaufort Laboratory gave the S/FFMC an update on the status of menhaden activity in the Gulf of Mexico. Through the beginning of October 431,000 MT of gulf menhaden have been landed for reduction which is up 14% from last year and up 4% from the five year mean. 41 vessels operated in 2008 with 38 steamers and 2 run boats. **Smith** also reported on the Atlantic menhaden fishery noting that the estimate on the Atlantic coast for reduction in 2009 was 109,900 MT which is below the 5 year average. **Smith** also reported that legislation has been drafted to place a moratorium on reduction fishing throughout the Chesapeake Bay. The Chesapeake Bay cap ends in 2010 and the reduction fishery has not reached the cap to date. The NMFS Beaufort Lab has been monitoring the cap using the Captain's Daily Fishing Reports (CDFR). The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board has requested that the cap for menhaden be extended for an additional three years to 2013. **Smith** reported that L. Simpson noted at a recent S/FFMC meeting there were discussions of cuts to the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) program. Menhaden was included in those discussions, with no cuts imminent to the menhaden program at this time; however it is possible in the future. Menhaden port sampling in the Gulf is funded by FIN program. **Smith** then reported that J. Rester addressed the MAC and discussed the design and implementation of a survey dedicated to determining menhaden recruitment in the rivers and upper bays. This project could cost as much as 200K per year after startup costs for nets and boats. Rester noted that the group will continue to address a more realistic budget as well as looking for a source of funding.

Smith reported that H. Perry of the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) has been working with a student on patterns in climate and the effects on blue crab landings in the Gulf of Mexico. Perry is submitting a proposal to SK to examine the same climate effects on menhaden recruitment. It was suggested that S. Marowski of NOAA be invited to the March 2010 meeting to give a presentation on Global Climate Change.

Smith reported that B. Wallace of Daybrook Fisheries became Chairman of the MAC by rotation.

Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel

S. VanderKooy reported on the C/RFAP meeting held on Monday. N. Parry of NOAA Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project gave a presentation to the C/RFAP on the National Marine Debris Program and provided information on recent and current activities in the Gulf.

VanderKooy also reported that B. Sauls of FFWCC gave a detailed presentation on the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) For-Hire Logbook Workshop and pilot program. Sauls reviewed the recommendations from the Workshops by noting that a pilot study should be conducted to test the requirements for For-Hire vessels leaving and returning to the dock coupled

with a dockside survey to validate self-reported effort and harvest; and a pilot study to test the "at-sea" methodologies which include on-board video and human observers. **The C/RFAP moved to have the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) support the MRIP Gulf of Mexico For-Hire Logbook Pilot Program as outlined above. M. Ray moved to accept this motion. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

VanderKooy reported that Commission staff provided updates on programmatic activities related to IJF, Artificial Reef, Invasive Species, and the EDRP program. J. Rester gave a presentation on offshore aquaculture site selection, illustrating data elements that went into the regions of least impact on other fisheries, navigation, oil and gas exploration, and marine protected areas. It was noted by C/RFAP members that it will be years before aquaculture will be taking place in the Gulf. **VanderKooy** also reported that in lieu of NOAA adopting the aquaculture FMP, the GMFMC was allowed to approve it and begin implementation.

VanderKooy reported that D. Angelo was elected Chairman for the Recreational Panel and P. Horn was re-elected Chairman of the Commercial Panel.

FIN Data Program Report

D. Donaldson gave an update on the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) program. As a result of the S/FFMC meeting held in August 2009, activities for 2010 include: coordination and administration of FIN activities, collecting, managing and disseminating marine recreational fisheries data, head boat port sampling, Gulf menhaden port sampling, FIN data management system, trip ticket program implementation and operations in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. **Donaldson** noted that the total budget is just under \$5 million and this is approximately an \$800,000 shortfall for next year. Hopefully money will be found in time to include in the Cooperative Agreement, but at this point biological sampling has been cut.

Donaldson reported on the issue of the Confidentiality Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). At the August S/FFMC meeting it was thought that the MOA was not valid for various reasons. However, this was a misunderstanding and has since been resolved.

Donaldson and **B. Sutter** of NOAA discussed the funding shortfall of approximately \$800,000 for 2010. There was discussion on the funding process for the FIN program. **Sutter** stressed the importance of open communication with NOAA/NMFS personnel.

Preliminary Results of Macroeconomic/Fuel Price Study

A. Miller gave a presentation on the results of the macroeconomics/fuel price study which was a joint project with the GSMFC and the University of Minnesota. In the recent past fuel prices have been a major factor in recreational fishing effort. **Miller** gave several examples of why recreational fishing trips either increased or decreased for a variety of reasons; increase/decrease in fuel price, increase/decrease in state unemployment, weather variables, etc. Data from these types of exercises can be used to evaluate expected fishing patterns as the U.S. economy rises and falls. Other variables can be examined in the future, such as boat sales as predictors of shifts in fishing patterns.

Gustav and Ike Disaster Funding Update

J. Shepard of LDWF reported they had received approximately \$40 million in disaster grant money in April and began to send out applications in mid-May. The first checks were processed in early September. **Shepard** noted that there were approximately 4,000 commercial fishermen or dealers who were eligible for the money and 2,762 applications were received. To date 1,639 checks totaling \$7 million have been mailed.

M. Ray of TPWD reported that Texas received a \$7 million grant and this will go towards habitat work, oysters, wetlands, etc.

Update on Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles

P. Burchfield, Director of the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, Texas gave a presentation on Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles by giving a brief history of this project. In 1978 the U.S. and Mexico entered into a bi-national program to conserve the most critically endangered species of sea turtle, the Kemp's Ridley. The Gladys Porter Zoo was asked in 1981 to administer the U.S. portion of this effort in Mexico because of their geographic locale and also because they had been working with this species since 1972.

Burchfield reported that in 2009 94% of the nests were located in a 78 mile stretch of beach from Tepehuajes to Barra Del Tordo, Mexico. **Burchfield** reported that there were less than 600 nesting females in 1985 and in 2009 this bi-national program protected 121,144 nests and 1,089,452 hatchlings. This year 197 nests were located on the Texas coast, when 20 years ago there were none.

Burchfield noted that 2009 has had some challenges. The Mexican government had ordered everyone off the beach because of swine flu, border unrest created anxiety, and gang activity along the beach and turtle communities. However, this bi-national project continues. The number of turtles nesting has increased to the point that it may be necessary to leave a number of nests *in-situ* and allow nature to begin to take its normal roll in this species life history.

Status of IJF Fishery Management Plans and Other IJF Activities

S. VanderKooy gave an overview of activities related to Fishery Management Plan (FMP) development. The Oyster Technical Task Force (TTF) has been working on a revision to the Oyster FMP. It is anticipated that the TTF will have a complete draft revision by the end of 2009.

The Arenarius TTF is highly motivated and moving the drafting process forward. It is hoped that the profile could be completed by late spring of 2010 pending no funding issues.

The GSMFC Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) continues to work toward regional enforcement goals. The LEC is working to support the on-going recovery efforts through enforcement and support to the EDRP. The LEC holds monthly conference calls to keep communication open and to share information. The publication of the "Officer's Pocket Field

Guide” for rules and regulations across the Gulf States was met with overwhelming approval by the LEC.

The second edition of the Otolith Manual was completed in July and includes several additional species for which data are currently being collected under the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) program. The IJF Coordinator presented the second edition of the Otolith Manual at the 4th International Otolith Conference in Monterey, California. The manual was well received and 240 CD copies were distributed. This manual is available as a download from the GSMFC website.

VanderKooy reported that the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) compliance matrix is now being reviewed for scientific recommendations not normally included in the S/FFMC matrix. There was general discussion on the compliance matrix.

J. Shepard congratulated S. VanderKooy and the Otolith Manual Work Group on their hard work.

Election of Chairman and Facilitator

V. Vail was re-elected as Chairman.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING
MINUTES - 60th Annual Meeting
Wednesday, October 14, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi**

Chairman B. Gautreaux called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m.

L. Simpson recognized FIN Staff Assistant, **Madeleine Travis**. He reported that she was retiring after 14 ½ years with the Commission at the end of the year. She was presented with a token of appreciation from the Staff and Commissioners for her service. **Madeleine** expressed her appreciation and thanked the Commission for her many happy years of association.

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

Chris Denson, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Vernon Minton*)
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Inc., Bon Secour, AL
Virginia Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)
Thad Altman, Florida Legislature, Melbourne, FL
Butch Gautreaux, Louisiana Legislature, Morgan City, LA
Wilson Gaidry, Houma, LA
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge (*Proxy for Randy Pausina*)
David McKinney, Environmental Defense Fund, Austin, TX
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Carter Smith*)
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Tommy Gollott, Mississippi Legislature, Biloxi, MS
Joe Gill, Joe Gill Consulting, LLC, Ocean Springs, MS
William Perret, 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
Alex Miller, Staff Economist, Ocean Springs, MS
Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, SFP/ANS Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Teri Freitas, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Madeleine Travis, FIN Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Buck Sutter, NOAA/NMFS/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Gary Graham, Texas Sea Grant, West Columbia, TX
Tony Reisinger, Texas Sea Grant, San Benito, TX
Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
Judy Jamison, Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Tampa, FL
Logan Repess, Texas Sea Grant, Austin, TX
Rick Bums, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Biloxi, MS
Kristen Laursen, NOAA/NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL
Walter Chataginer, MS Marine Enforcement, Biloxi, MS
Mike Travis, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was presented for adoption. **C. Perret** requested that two items be added under other business: 1) a discussion of Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) Resolution No. 081809-2; and, 2) a discussion of a resolution supporting proposed S. 1311 (legislation proposed by Senators Wicker, Landrieu, and Cochran) that would enhance and strengthen cooperative efforts to protect and restore the Gulf. **C. Perret moved to adopt agenda. D. McKinney second. The agenda was adopted as amended.**

Approval of Minutes

Minutes were adopted as presented.

GSMFC Standing Committee Reports

Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) – **W. Chataginer** reported that the LEC met on Tuesday, October 13, 2009.

He briefly reviewed several topics discussed by the LEC which included the status of Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF) activities, concerns regarding how the various states market and label shrimp, Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC), and concerns regarding oyster gardening. The Officers' Pocket Guides have been distributed and were well received by field officers.

J. Mayne was elected chairman for the upcoming year. **R. Goodrich** was elected vice chairman.

The report was approved as submitted.

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) Report – **J. Shepard** reported that the TCC met on Tuesday, October 13, 2009. They received reports from all of the Gulf States and NOAA

Fisheries. The following subcommittees reported to the TCC: Crab, SEAMAP, Data Management, Artificial Reef, and Habitat. He briefed the Commissioners on their activities. Of major concern of the States are funding shortfalls.

The TCC also received reports from **C. Ponce** regarding the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (GMFMC) Outreach Committee. The TCC will work on a new TCC Fisheries Outreach Subcommittee in the coming year.

Other reports included an overview of NOAA's Marine Debris Program, a review of the IJF Compliance Matrix, and a presentation on the National Fisheries Economic Program for the Regional Commissions.

The report was approved as presented.

State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee (S-FFMC) Report – **V. Vail** reported that the S-FFMC met earlier in the day. The S-FFMC received reports from the Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC) and the Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel (C/RFAP). She briefed the Commissioners on their activities. On behalf of the S-FFMC and at the request of the C/RFAP, **V. Vail moved to request the Commission support and recommends moving forward with the MRIP Gulf of Mexico For-Hire Logbook Pilot Program as outlined. D. McKinney seconded. The motion was approved.**

The S-FFMC also heard updates on the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF), Artificial Reef activities, Invasive Species Program, Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP), and FIN Data Management Program. They received reports on the GMFMC's Suitable Offshore Aquaculture site selection, and results of the macroeconomics/fuel price study. Also discussed were Gustav and Ike Disaster Funding and the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Bi-national Project.

D. Angelo was elected recreational chairman and **P. Horn** was elected commercial chairman.

The report was approved as presented.

Sea Grant Fisheries Extension Advisory Panel Report (SG-FEAP)

G. Graham reported that the SG-FEAP met on Tuesday, October 13. The group heard a report from **Dr. Glen Thomas** regarding the New England Marine Resource Education Program. This is a pilot program being conducted by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. Basically it provides basic training for members of the fishing industry regarding science, fisheries management, the Council process, etc. These training sessions usually involve about 20 people, who meet 2 to 3 days at a time as a cost of about \$10,000. The SG-FEAP discussed the potential of a regional Sea Grant training program.

G. Graham stated that the theme of this meeting was "Hazardous Algae Blooms". Members shared information on this topic during their meeting.

NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office

B. Sutter reported on the activities of the SERO. He discussed proposed changes to the Senate's proposed budget. The first is a proposal by Senator Vitter to add riders to the budget to stop the issuing of offshore aquaculture permit in the Gulf until NOAA Fisheries prepares a National Assessment. He has also requested that NOAA prepare an assessment on catch shares for ongoing programs.

He reported that in regards to the catch share/IFQ Programs the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) has been issued eight, possibly nine lawsuits. He will keep the Commissioners apprised on these law suits.

He reported that **Roy Crabtree** has just received a 2009 Presidential Rank Award for his work in the Gulf of Mexico. Only two awards were presented this year, the other was presented to **Steve Murawski**. **L. Simpson** noted that these were well deserved by both recipients.

He briefly discussed several amendments that would be discussed next week at the GMFMC meeting.

He reviewed recent personnel changes in NOAA Fisheries. Dr. Jane Lubchenco is the new NOAA Administrator. A new structure was added for NOAA which will impact fisheries. The Deputy Undersecretary will be divided and there will be two positions. One will be a Senior Deputy Undersecretary and one will be an Assistant Secretary. This will have to be approved by the Senate. The Assistant Secretary will oversee all the ecosystem activities that will of course include fisheries.

He reported that there would be a hearing the week of October 19th in New Orleans regarding the Ocean Policy Task Force. He invited anyone interested to attend. There will be hearings in other States as well. He encouraged the Commission to stay involve in this process because it definitely puts a more regional focus on fisheries management.

He introduced Krista Laursen, NOAA Gulf of Mexico Regional Coordinator, and asked her to discuss the current approach of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. She provided general information and listed 6 Priority Issue Teams (PIT). They are water quality; habitat conservation and restoration; ecosystem integration and assessment; nutrients and nutrient impacts; coastal community resilience; and environmental education. She provided detailed information on the Ecosystem Integration and Assessment PIT. She asked the Commission to engage in how best to work together to mesh information on fish/living resources with physical ecosystem information. She provided the following website for those wanting additional information <http://gulfofmexicoalliance.org/> and <http://gulfofmexicoalliance.org/issues/ecosystems.html>.

NOAA Fisheries Budget Updated

L. Simpson directed the Commissioners to the briefing material he provided on both the Senate and House Appropriation bill. He reviewed NMFS's budget in both versions. He pointed out

differences between the House and Senate and other programs of interest in the Gulf. Aquaculture programs are a high priority in the Senate bill. He discussed how some programs were clumped. SEAMAP funds were clumped with Chesapeake Bay funding. He reviewed several congressionally designated projects. He reported that Senator Cochran's office requested an increase in the IJF and FIN programs but his request was not included in the final approved congressionally mandated projects.

Discussion of Alternatives to Otter Trawling

W. Gaidry briefed the Commissioners on alternatives to otter trawling. He stated that 60 percent of shrimpers in Louisiana are harvesting shrimp with modified beam trawls (skimmer nets and butterfly nets). The advantages of modified beam trawls are that the shrimp caught are of higher quality, the value of higher quality shrimp is not affected by imports, the cost of harvest is lower, the nets and gear are physically easier to operate, and the nets can be fished on the bottom, mid water and top water with ease and no modifications. In addition the modified beam trawls produce no bottom damage when fished at mid water and top water. Stationary nets can be used to harvest shrimp which does not create carbon dioxide emissions and there is a higher bi-catch survival. The more a fishing vessel cost to build, maintain and operate the more fishing effort it must produce to achieve profitability.

He presented a list of types of fisheries approved by the United Nation (UN). He discussed the UN position on small-scale and artisanal fisheries. He asked the Commission to adopt the UN definition of these fisheries.

W. Gaidry is working with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) on a detailed report on alternatives to otter trawling. This report will be available in the spring of 2010. The Commissioners deferred action on both the UN list of approved fisheries and alternatives to otter trawling because it would be better addressed in the TCC Subcommittee. These items will be on the TCC agenda at the March 2010 meeting.

Report on National State Directors Meeting

L. Simpson reported that this meeting is held on a biennial cycle and that locations for this meeting rotated throughout the U.S. The Commission co-sponsored the recent meeting that was held in San Antonio, TX. He briefed the Commissioners on items discussed. The San Antonio meeting was very successful.

Interim Report of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force

L. Simpson provided an *Interim Report of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force* dated September 10, 2009 and a copy of his testimony to the Ocean Policy Committee in March 2002. He reviewed the purpose of the task force: "*In order to better meet our Nation's stewardship responsibilities for the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes, there is established an Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force, to be led by the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality*". **L. Simpson** discussed the President's charge for this Task Force. A major emphasis is coastal and

marine spatial planning. He stated that he saw this as partitioning the ocean. There are those who are concerned about this approach.

The Task Force is comprised of 24 senior policy level officials from executive department agencies and offices across the federal government. Work was begun in June 2009 and they have met four times since September 10, 2009. The Task Force discussed key issues with a variety of knowledgeable sources, including federal and state agencies. **L. Simpson** was not aware of anyone contacted in the Gulf. He is concerned that marine issues may not be having as much input as freshwater fisheries.

A meeting will be held October 19, 2009 in New Orleans to discuss the Ocean Policy Task Force. Last week **L. Simpson** was asked to present testimony at the upcoming meeting but he will be unable to attend since it conflicts with the GMFMC meeting.

K. Laursen stated that the purpose of the meeting in New Orleans was to receive comments on the Ocean Policy Task Force. For those unable to attend, comments can be submitted online. **K. Laursen** will send the press release to the Commission staff for distribution.

Discussion of Impacts of Imported Shrimp on the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery

M. Travis, Industry Economist, NMFS/SERO gave a power point presentation on the status of the Gulf Shrimp Industry – how the industry has gotten to where it is now. He provided information from 2000 to 2008 on effort, landings and imports. He discussed prices by size for the same period.

He observed that the biggest decreases in offshore effort were in 2003 (increase in imports) and 2005 (Hurricane Katrina and Rita). Offshore efforts were down 70 percent from 2002 to 2008. Production in 2006 was equal to 2000 but at a much lower level of effort. In 2006 prices hit “bottom”, a 50% decrease from 2000 levels. Decline was even greater in real terms if you adjusted for inflation. Price premium narrowed from 2001 to 2003, increased in 2004 and 2005, narrowed in 2006, but increased in 2007 and 2008. He noted that there was a direct relationship between absolute price changes and changes in price premiums.

He discussed imports and duties from China, Vietnam, Thailand, Brazil, Ecuador, and India. The import market share has increased from 81 percent in 2000 to 88 percent in 2003, to 91 percent in 2008. There were major import increases in 2001, 2003, and 2006. The rate of the increase generally slowed after 2003, with a slight decrease in 2007 and no change in 2008.

He discussed a 2008 report by **W. Keithly**, et al that pointed out that duties initially worked with the affected countries due to the “Harassment Effect” (the fear of high duties). The effect has lessened over time due to the fact that duties were less than feared. The market shares of exporting countries changed significantly from 2003 to 2008. China was affected due to a temporary import ban in 2008.

In 2009 imports are up by 1 percent over 2008 levels with the main increases in March through June. The increase is fueled by peeled product, with headless, shell-on actually decreasing. The

domestic landings are up by 39% over 2008, but 2008 was the lowest landings since 1975. So, 2009 is only about 4 percent higher relative to 2007 and 19 percent lower than 2006. Fuel prices are down significantly from 2008 but vary by area. He anticipates an increase in fuel prices for 2009. The biggest change is prices, with the largest decreases in large size (30-50 percent) but little to no change in smaller sizes. This represents a collapse of prices and price premiums in 2009.

Imports are part of the problem but not the sole issue. He noted that imports continue to increase even though there is a decline in prices due to the economy. This suggests that the market may not be functioning properly. There are reports that the imports are getting better prices than the domestic product. This may require new trade actions. Additional government assistance may be needed. Some of the things being discussed is the quality of the domestic product, certification and branding of the domestic product. The general economy is also a key factor. Shrimp is a microcosm of the seafood industry and the economy in general.

Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF)

S. VanderKooy gave a status report of the various IJF projects. The revisions to the Oyster FMP are very close to a final draft and he hopes to have it complete by the end of the year. There has been substantial progress on a stock assessment for the fishery.

The *Arenarius* Profile has now become a two species complex. They are now working on a profile for sand and silver seatrout. It is hoped that the profile could be completed by late spring 2010.

The Crab Subcommittee is continuing to seek funding for the lipofuscin work proposed in the Gulf to age hatchery and wild caught blue crabs. They are also working on producing a regional stock assessment using surplus production models.

Other topics discussed included LEC activities and publications and the *Second Edition of the Otolith Manual*, which was presented at the 4th International Otolith Conference in Monterey, CA this past August.

The meeting convened at 5:00 pm.

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING
MINUTES - 60th Annual Meeting
Thursday, October 15, 2009
Biloxi, Mississippi**

B. Gautreaux reconvened the meeting at 8:31 am.

The following Commissioners and/or proxies were present:

Commissioners

Chris Denson, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Vernon Minton*)
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Inc., Bon Secour, AL
Virginia Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)
Thad Altman, Florida Legislature, Melbourne, FL
Butch Gautreaux, Louisiana Legislature, Morgan City, LA
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge (*Proxy for Randy Pausina*)
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Carter Smith*)
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Tommy Gollott, Mississippi Legislature, Biloxi, MS
Joe Gill, Joe Gill Consulting, LLC, Ocean Springs, MS
William Perret, 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
Alex Miller, Staff Economist, Ocean Springs, MS
Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS
James Ballard, SFP/ANS Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Teri Freitas, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Kristen Laursen, NOAA/NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL

SEAMAP Program Report

J. Rester provided the Commissioners with copies of the 2003 *SEAMAP Atlas* and the SEAMAP's *Annual Report to the TCC*. He reported that in 2009, SEAMAP begins its 28th year of fishery independent sampling. So far this year, SEAMAP has conducted a Winter

Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, Winter Plankton Survey, a Spring Plankton Survey, an Inshore Longline Survey, a Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, a Fall Plankton Survey, and a Reefish Survey.

In FY 2009, SEAMAP was funded at \$5.098 million for all three components. This was a \$700,000 increase over FY2008. The increased funding was used to expand the current Inshore Longline Survey and begin a new trap/video survey for reefish off of Florida.

SEAMAP will be updating their management plan next and as part of this process, SEAMAP has begun a strategic planning exercise that should help guide current and future SEAMAP surveys.

The Commission has been handling SEAMAP data management responsibilities for the Gulf since 2008. Currently the SEAMAP database contains over 27 years of fishery independent data on the Gulf of Mexico. The Commission is also working on providing access to the database over the Internet.

Sport Fish Restoration Program Report (SFP)

J. Ballard provided a written report of SFP activities for spring 2009. He discussed activities of the TCC Artificial Reef Subcommittee. He reported that he had added over three hundred new artificial reef journal articles to the "Reef Compiled Data" bibliography database that is accessible from the GSMFC website.

He attended and participated in the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) annual meeting as a new committee member.

The SFP provided travel funds to members of the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel (GSARP) on aquatic invasive species to allow them to attend the Panel's spring meeting in Shreveport, LA.

Fisheries Information Network (FIN) Report

D. Donaldson provided a written report on current program activity.

He reviewed FIN funding for 2010 as follows:

•Coordination and Administration	\$ 412,000
•Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data	\$2,943,000
•Head Boat Port sampling in Texas and Florida	\$ 231,000
•Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling	\$ 60,000
•Operations of FIN Data Management System	\$ 226,000
•Trip Tick Program Development and Operations	\$1,081,000

Total amount of the FY2010 funding is \$4,954,000. **D. Donaldson** reported that due to budget restraints the Biological Sampling Projects will not be funded in 2010. He will continue to seek funding for this component in the future.

Habitat Program Report

J. Rester reported that the Commission's MARFIN funded bottom mapping project was completed in March 2009. The project developed a user friendly, interactive system that identifies, describes, and displays resources characterizing the seabed habitat of the Gulf of Mexico. The database contains approximately 275,000 seabed observations characterizing the seabed in two different datasets.

He reported that the Commission's portion of the NOAA funded aquaculture project has been completed. All GIS work and a final report were finished in July 2009. The final results indicated that approximately 75,000 square kilometers were deemed suitable for offshore cage aquaculture.

The Habitat Subcommittee and the Artificial Reef Subcommittee have developed a guidelines document for inshore artificial reefs. The Habitat Subcommittee will be reviewing the document again at their October meeting.

The GMFMC will be updating their Essential Fish Habitat Amendment next year. This is part of a five year review.

In regards to LNG facilities the Port Dolphin facility off of Tampa released a final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) this past summer. It is proposed to be a closed loop facility with the main fishery impact being from pipeline installation. The company proposed a very good mitigation plan for those impacts. A decision for this facility should be in by October 26. The Bienville Offshore Energy Terminal withdrew their license application for an open loop system. Since then they have proposed to come back with a closed loop ambient air vaporizer facility located about 60 miles south of Mobile, AL.

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Program Report

J. Ballard provided a written report in the Commissioner's Briefing Book. He discussed various meetings that he attended since the last meeting. He updated the Commissioners on the various States' ANS Plans. Florida and Louisiana have completed plans. Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina have sent the final draft of their plans to the ANS Task Force for approval. Mississippi and Texas will soon submit final drafts of their plans to the Task Force. North Carolina is in the preliminary stages of formulating a plan.

He reported that GSARP is exploring other funding possibilities to secure money for ANS demonstration projects. The Panel will be submitting a proposal for a USDA- NRCS grant this coming spring.

The Commission staff has developed a new GSARP website that will be presented to the Panel at their fall meeting. He will continue to work with the Panel's Information Management Work Group to update text on the new website.

Plans have been made for the ANSTF to meet in Silver Spring, MD on November 4-5, 2009. The GSARP will meet in Raleigh, NC on November 10-11, 2009.

Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP I & II) Report

R. Hode updated the Commissioners on EDRP I and II with a written report and a power point presentation. He discussed accomplishments by project and reported on reimbursement by project.

For those who want to stay current on expenditures in their respective states he reported that this information was available at the Commission's website under EDRP Program activities. This information is broken down by state and projects.

R. Hode emphasized that EDRP I spending was at approximately 56% of its budget, while the timeline for the grant was at approximately the 60% point. He noted that spending through October 2009 was running approximately 4 percentage points below the five year timeline and that this was an improvement over the previous report, where spending ran approximately 8 to 10 points behind. He pointed out that the oyster component was the most active component Gulf-wide and that the States had almost reached the required \$38 M congressional requirement for oyster restoration, with the current spending level at \$36.5 M.

He indicated that Gulf-wide reimbursements were well ahead of the grant timeline and that nearly 67% of the \$85 M appropriated for economic assistance to the Gulf fishing industry had been distributed during the first 24 months of the 60 month cycle. It was also noted that Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi had completed the distribution of their portions of the "Additional Assistance for TED/BRD Compliance" requirement and that Louisiana was nearing its completion.

Economic Data Program (EDP) Report

Alex Miller provided a written report and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Commission's EDP. The major components of the EDP are economic data collection, economic analysis and research, and economic outreach and dissemination.

He reported on the economic survey of the inshore shrimp fleet currently underway. The objective of this program is to collect data to assess the economic performance and impact of the inshore shrimp fleet throughout the Gulf of Mexico. He described the activities of the program and briefed the Commissioners on the preliminary survey results. He anticipates a final report without impact analysis in early 2010.

Current work being done under the EDP shows that economic variables influence fishing effort in the Gulf of Mexico and that may benefit both ecological and economic stakeholders.

Executive Committee Report

B. Gautreaux reported that the Executive Committee met on Wednesday, October 14, 2009. He reviewed the Committee's discussion and actions.

The Committee reviewed and approved the FY2008 audit. There were no significant findings. **W. Garner** updated the Committee on the Commission's financial status. Commission reserve funds are currently approximately \$330K, an increase of about \$100K over 2006.

After review and discussion the Committee approved the proposed FY2010 Commission Budget in the amount of \$6,743,714.

W. Garner recommended that it would be financially beneficial to pay off the Commission's mortgage on their office building. Interest rates have dropped and it will save the Commission approximately \$1,000 if the building is paid off this year. The Committee agreed and approved this recommendation.

There was a discussion regarding the need to increase state dues but due to the current economic climate the Committee decided not to take action.

G. Herring presented a memorandum outlining lodging allowances. The purpose of the memo is to provide guidance to the Executive Director which would allow him to authorize meeting costs above the GSA rates up to 25%. The Committee approved the memo as presented.

W. Garner reported on the Commission's retirement fund and an issue that has arisen. The Commission has been incorrectly classified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The Executive Director became aware of the error early this year and has taken steps to rectify the situation. The Commission has hired an attorney to work with the IRS and staff is currently awaiting a ruling. In the interim, the Commission has set up a new 401K retirement account and is currently dispersing funds into this account for all employees. It is anticipated that this issue should be resolved in 4-6 months and should result in a favorable resolution.

L. Simpson reported that the Louisiana Seafood Promotion Board has initiated a project to provide Gulf seafood to the U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is a worthy project and **L. Simpson** requested permission to participate. The Committee approved travel for the Executive Director to travel to Iraq/Afghanistan to assist with this project.

The Executive Committee approved a 2% (or minimum of \$500) raise for all staff. In addition, the following staff received an additional \$1,000: Assistant Director, SEAMAP Coordinator, IJF Coordinator, Systems Administrator and RecFIN(SE) Programmer/Analyst.

M. Ray moved to approve the report and actions of the Executive Committee. **J. Gill** seconded. The motion passed.

State Director's Reports

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

The Florida Legislature concluded a difficult 2009 session in May. Given the fiscal shortfalls facing the state, the Commission's recurring budget was reduced by only ten percent and no positions were eliminated. The programs affected most by the budget cut were those funded by documentary stamp revenues (from real estate transactions): land management, lake restoration and invasive plant management. Funding for law enforcement vehicle and vessel replacement, red tide research, and various other agency projects were also cut. The Legislature proposed a two percent cut in specified salary categories but Governor Crist authorized agencies to absorb the cut by further adjusting program budgets in lieu of eliminating positions if they chose (and were able). Funding for artificial reef development and grant related activities were not reduced.

The Legislature repealed the provision exempting residents from the requirement to hold a saltwater fishing license if fishing from the shore or a structure attached to shore and created a resident shoreline saltwater fishing license with a fee of \$7.50. Resident seniors age 65 or older, disabled residents, residents home on military leave, residents receiving financial assistance from various government programs, residents fishing in their resident county using natural baits and a pole without a line retrieval mechanism, and youths under the age of 16 are not required to hold a recreational saltwater fishing license. The new license requirement went into effect on August 1; it's estimated that annual sales will be in the range of 115,000 to 185,000. These anticipated revenues precluded a need to further reduce funding for law enforcement and research activities.

The Legislature also: increased fees for several Commission recreational licenses and permits, including the snook permit (from \$2 to \$10) and the spiny lobster permit (from \$2 to \$4), effective July 1, 2010; dedicated a portion of the license fees (up to 10%) to the promotion of hunting and sport fishing activities, especially those providing opportunities for youth participation; and established penalties if careless actions damaged sea grasses in Florida's aquatic preserves.

The 520 ft. long former missile tracking ship General Hoyt S. Vandenberg was sunk within the designated permitted area six miles off Key West on May 27, 2009, successfully ending an eight year project. The vessel sank upright in 142 ft. of water within one minute and 47 seconds after 44 holes below the waterline (22 on each side of the vessel) were opened with explosive cutting charges. The vessel has a vertical navigational clearance of about 45 ft and rests in a designated navigational "Area to Be Avoided". There are six mooring buoys attached to the ship. About 500 private vessels were present, observing from outside a one mile standoff when the vessel sank. Post deployment monitoring of the Vandenberg to detect user shifts from natural reefs in the general vicinity to the Vandenberg continues. Baseline pre-sink data of half a dozen sites was collected prior to the vessel being deployed. The Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) is currently receiving funding from FWC to conduct quarterly fish count surveys on the Vandenberg and on some surrounding natural reefs.

The total cost of the project was approximately \$8.6 million, including \$1.25 million from the U.S. Maritime Administration to the FWC, \$1 million from the FWC, and \$1.6 million from the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development. The remaining financing

came from the City of Key West, Monroe County, and the Monroe County Tourist Development Council. The City of Key West is the official vessel title holder and holds the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Environmental Protection permits for the sink site. Completion of the final closeout report to MARAD is pending receipt of data from the primary contractor and the City of Key West.

The Oriskany Reef, a 910 ft long aircraft carrier sunk in May 2006 in 212 ft of water 23 nautical miles southeast of Pensacola, remains a popular fishing and diving site, despite subsiding 8-10 ft as a result of 30 ft. waves during Hurricane Gustav. This increased the depth to the flight deck from 137 to 147 ft. and the depth to the top of the superstructure from 68 to 78 feet. Monitoring of PCB levels in red snapper and other fishes at the Oriskany Reef continues. Texas A and M's Geological and Environmental Resource Group's analytical lab tests samples for 209 polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) congeners. For the Oriskany Reef, EPA established a Tier 1 monitoring total PCB screening level of .020 parts per million (20 parts per billion or 20,000 parts per trillion). Mean values above this level would trigger a more intensive (Tier 2) sampling effort. The Florida Department of Health's advisory trigger is 50,000 parts per trillion total PCBs (50 parts per billion). Of the fish sampled in April 2009, six of thirty fish (20%) exceeded the EPA Tier 1 screening level; four of these six samples exceeded the Florida Department of Health screening level. The remaining 24 ranged in total PCB tissue concentration from 2,528 p/g to 17,029 p/g. The average PCB concentration in Oriskany caught red snapper appears to be trending downward over time. Staff is currently working on a report for the EPA, summarizing the results of the sampling conducted from December 2007- April 2009.

Last Spring the Commission approved a series of regional 10 day closures in the blue crab fishery to allow retrieval of abandoned, lost or derelict crab traps. In July and August 2009, FWC contractors removed 1,839 blue crab traps from coastal and inland waters from Nassau County on the Georgia border south through Monroe County and north to the Wakulla/Franklin County line in the eastern Panhandle. Another 1,024 lost or abandoned traps were removed by FWC authorized volunteer efforts. The traditional trap retrieval program recovered 6,108 lost or abandoned spiny lobster and stone crab traps during June and July this year. Blue crab trap retrieval will take place in the St. Johns River (east coast) and the western Panhandle during January 2010.

Recent Commission regulatory actions include but are not limited to:

- Approved (June 2009) of amendments to the Commission's rules for Gulf gag and red groupers and shallow water groupers to be consistent with regulations for these species in the Gulf federal waters.
- With reference to red snapper, in June 2009 the Commission reduced the Gulf red snapper recreational fishing season to two and a half months (June 1 – August 14) to be consistent with the open/closed seasons in Gulf federal waters.
- Approved (September 2009) amendments to rules governing vermilion snapper in state waters of the Atlantic to be consistent with regulations for that species in federal waters of the Atlantic.

- Approved amendments to the rules governing issuance of Special Activity Licenses (SAL) to clarify application and evaluation criteria, address genetic and health concerns for captive specimens and, where applicable, their authorized releases, and allow researchers to apply for a SAL to test innovative gears. SALs are issued to allow certain activities otherwise prohibited by law to proceed. Such activities include, but are not limited to, collection of undersize/oversize specimens and collection during a closed season for scientific research or education/exhibition purposes.
- Approved amendments to the rules governing commercial harvest of blue crabs to create a tiered administrative penalty system that allows the penalties to be assessed relative to the severity of the violation and the number of previous violations up to the maximum amount allowed by statute for violations of the blue crab effort management program.
- Approved amendments to the rules governing snook to clarify that the Commission prohibits the sale of snook harvested or taken within or without the state in order to fully protect snook from illegal sales or importation.

Alabama – **C. Denson** presented a report on behalf of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Marine Resource Division (ADCNR, MRD).

Biological Section - Using Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP) funds, ADCNR/State Lands Division has secured a contract with a firm to restore approximately 16 acres of marsh along 5000' of eroded shoreline west of the Bayou La Batre ship channel in Mississippi Sound. Sediment will be dredged from nearby areas and planted with appropriate marsh grasses to provide habitat and stabilization. Plans also include the use of wave attenuating devices to protect the new shoreline.

The Alabama Marine Resources Division (AMRD) closed all public oyster reefs to harvest on March 24, 2009 due to insufficient quantities of legal oysters to support the commercial or recreational fisheries. The reefs are to remain closed until sufficient quantities of oysters are available for the commercial fishery. AMRD is using this time to review current management practices and make adjustments as deemed necessary to rehabilitate and maintain Alabama's oyster reefs. Approximately 300 acres were planted with cultch material in Portersville Bay of Mississippi Sound.

AMRD implemented a sampling program utilizing oystermen in late March (using EDRP funds) to assess the recovery efforts to date. Oyster catchers were required to collect samples equivalent to a square meter quadrant and to quantify their catch. Sampling continued into June with few spat present on the main reefs. The western arm of Heron Bay was the only location with spat and small oysters present.

AMRD continues to work with the Alabama Department of Public Health to monitor water quality in the western portion of Mobile Bay from Fowl River to the Arlington Channel (Upper Bay). This effort is required by FDA guidelines as part of a potential oyster relay project for the development of a new reef and to assist the recovery of existing reefs.

AMRD has met with several state agencies and NGOs to discuss oyster gardening programs in state waters. AMRD's primary objections to proposed projects have been the possession of sub-legal oysters (attached to piers) and the growing of oysters in waters prohibited for harvest due to the possibility of consumption.

The new Gulf State Park Pier (GSPP), destroyed by Hurricane Ivan in 2004, was opened on July 23, 2009. Officially the longest pier in the Gulf, it has drawn over 67,000 fishermen and visitors alike through September 30, 2009. Artificial reefs were placed around the terminus of the pier prior to its opening. This was the first time artificial reefs have been used to enhance the angling experience for Gulf State Park Pier fishermen. The old pier was demolished and used to create artificial reefs offshore Alabama.

AMRD took possession of its saltwater pipeline upon completion of the GSPP. This pipeline supplies high salinity water from the Gulf of Mexico to the Claude Peteet Mariculture Center allowing for the potential future research of Gulf fishes. The original intake system was destroyed by Hurricane Ivan in 2004.

Beginning September 1, 2009, all Alabama recreation saltwater fishing licenses are issued and stored electronically. This was done so that Alabama would meet compliance requirements of the National Angler Registry.

AMRD staff continued to participate in dockside and for-hire effort surveys within the NMFS' Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistical Survey. Between March 1 and Sept. 27, 2009, staff members have collected 1,876 interviews from shore, charter, and private/rental boat anglers; this is 13% over the cumulative quota for Waves 2-5, with a full month of data collection remaining in Wave 5. Interview quotas were exceeded in all modes for all waves by an average of 24.8% (not including Wave 5).

AMRD staff continued collecting biological data via the Biological Sampling Program. Through August 2009, staff member have collected 1,043 otoliths for the priority species identified through the Fisheries Information Network (FIN). Otolith collections of recreationally harvested gray triggerfish and greater amberjack and commercially harvested striped mullet were well below target levels. Issues pertaining to availability for these three species were identified to explain why collections were not meeting targets. Striped mullet roe season will begin at the end of October so fish should be more abundant in local seafood dealers from which to sample.

Alabama seafood dealers continued use of the electronic trip ticket system to report seafood landings. For fiscal year 2009 thirty-three percent (33%) of licensed seafood dealers who reported landings used the electronic reporting system. Landings from these dealers comprised seventy-four percent (74%) of the total volume of landings.

A red drum stock assessment is under review and will be available soon. Southern flounder is the next species scheduled for a stock assessment.

AMRD staff participated in the Alabama Outdoor Expo April 30 - May 1 in Birmingham, Alabama. Staff from the biological and enforcement sections organized interactive displays

consisting touch tanks and ice tables as well equipment used during daily operations. Video feeds, children activities, and educational displays were also part of the AMRD exhibit. An estimated 5,000 people attended the Expo.

AMRD is working with an engineering and design firm (HDR, Inc) to produce plans for a new wet laboratory. The new facility will replace the existing 36 year old lab.

AMRD hired four biologists in April to fill positions vacated by recent departures and retirements.

Enforcement Section - The Alabama Legislature passed a bill requiring food service establishments to inform customers of the country of origin of food products. This requirement may be satisfied by placing a disclaimer on the menu or a placard 8 ½" x 11" in close proximity to their health rating.

The Enforcement Section's public outreach efforts have continued with numerous meetings with commercial, recreational and charter fishermen organizations.

AMRD continued to expand the Coast Watch Program Community Policing Program. This program is co-sponsored by the Coastal Conservation Association. The program trains citizens to be the eyes and ears of the Enforcement Section by providing information to enforcement about observations of violations. Three training sessions were held this year to increase the number of Coast Watch members. The information they have provided has led directly to the arrests of several conservation violators.

All AMRD officers received ruggedized laptop computers, printers and drivers license scanners for use in their vehicles and vessels. These computers will be used for NCIC checks, instant notification of complaints, weekly and daily reports, and other needs.

AMRD, in conjunction with the University of Alabama and the Administrative Office of Courts, has developed an electronic e-citation program. The defendant's copy of the electronic citations is printed at the time of issuance in the field; the citation information is transmitted electronically to the court system. Among other items, the system captures the GPS location of all violations and warnings. This information will assist in the planning of patrols to address problem areas.

The Enforcement Section began using a new computer reporting and fleet management system on September 26, 2009. This is a web based reporting system for the officers' weekly reports and fleet management. The system will allow better compilation of the fuel usage and cost in a real time format as well as provide increased analytics of enforcement data collected from officer's patrols.

The Enforcement Section has begun the installation of cameras for the Marine Resources' Coastal Remote Monitoring System. The system will place up to 30 high quality cameras at different locations throughout coastal Alabama. The video will be available through a web based portal and will be accessible to officers in the field via a wireless internet connection. Not only will the officers be able to access the video, they will be able to manipulate the camera through a

web interface. The time/date stamped video will be stored for up to three weeks on secure servers for use as evidence. The sensors will include CCTV, thermal, and inferred cameras.

A regulation has been promulgated that brings our current "Saltwater Fish, Creel, Bag, Possession, and Size Limits" in line with federal regulations concerning the size limit for commercial red grouper and the size limit for recreational bonnet head sharks. This regulation also removes the size limit for commercial sharks.

A regulation has been promulgated that requires all fish be landed with head and fins intact, regardless of where they were taken. Sharks, swordfish and tuna can be landed in the form allowed by federal regulations.

A regulation has been promulgated that makes changes to the "Use of Gill Nets and Harvest of Mullet" regulation. This regulation makes it illegal to display an invalid gill net placard, closes certain areas to the use of gill nets, requires all gill nets and seines to have floats at no greater than prescribed intervals, and prohibits the possession of recreational gill nets more than 300 feet from shore.

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

Mississippi shrimp season opened south of the Intracoastal Waterway on June 25 at 6:00 a.m.; 230 vessels were counted shrimping. Mississippi waters north of the Intracoastal Waterway opened July 7. Two hundred and twelve vessels were counted shrimping Mississippi waters on this second opening. These low numbers are indicative of the many hardships of the shrimping industry, which this year include low shrimp numbers, poor prices due to cheap imported shrimp, fuel costs and loss of historical infrastructure support. It was the latest season opening on record for the state and the fewest participants which just 10 years ago were over 1000.

The DMR Shrimp & Crab Bureau is partnering with the MS Gulf Coast National Heritage Area (MGCNHA) and MS-AL Sea Grant Consortium to record oral histories as an educational video to tell the story of Mississippi's seafood industry. On-going interviews of local fishing community icons began in November 2008. The video should be finalized and distributed in fall 2009.

Production of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Profiles Series documentary has been completed. The 30-minute show is narrated by Lou Gossett, Jr. and first air September 23 on the Discovery Channel

DMR is currently developing an Endangered Species Act Section 6 Agreement Application Package for submission to NOAA Fisheries to promote better cooperation on the conservation of threatened and endangered marine species for the state.

The MS Crab Task Force will meet late September to work on the upcoming 2010 MS Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program, tentatively set for late January 2010. The Mississippi crab trap clean up program has received a \$31,000 grant from the Fish America Foundation in partnership

with the Brunswick Public Foundation and the NOAA Restoration Center for Community-based Habitat Restoration. To date, through the cooperative efforts of all agency partners, volunteers and fishermen, over 18,000 derelict trap have been removed and recycled.

In November (date TBA), DMR and partners will hold the fourth in a series of seminars with the goal of enhancing familiarity between interested groups and increasing awareness of the programs, needs and opportunities that are relevant to marine research of MS waters. "Invasive Species on the Mississippi Coast" will be the subject of the seminar. The previous seminar, "Harmful Algal Blooms" was held July 31, 2009.

Shellfish Bureau - A Norovirus workshop was held June 2nd at the MDMR Bolton Building in Biloxi. Participants included MDMR Shellfish Bureau, FDA, DEQ and Mississippi Public Health Officials and the Mississippi Hospitality Association. The meeting was held to discuss better communication methods in the event of a norovirus outbreak.

Lease Holders: One lease holder deposited 134.26 tons of #57 limestone on their 100 acre lease as part of the EDRP I oyster farming restoration program in July.

Personnel attended harmful algal blooms (HABs) training in St Petersburg on June 1st. Sampling procedures have been established in conjunction with the Phytoplankton Monitoring Network (PMN). This is a cooperative volunteer networking program sponsored by NOAA for monitoring algal blooms.

Oyster reef Monitoring and Assessment - Square meter dives and 1 minute dredge tows were sampled on the various commercial oyster reefs as part of our continuous reef monitoring program. The dive samples were expedited by the help of the MDMR Marine Patrol Dive Team as part of their dive training.

Artificial Reef Bureau - During this period, the Artificial Reef Bureau deployed approximately 20,000 cubic yards of crushed concrete and lime stone on 21 inshore reef sites in the three coastal counties. The inshore reefs are located near boat ramps for fishermen utilizing small boats, around piers for pier fisherman and near shore for wade fishermen.

There has been one steel hull vessel, 6 loads of concrete culverts and 230 Goliath Reef Balls deployed on Mississippi's offshore reefs. EDRP funds were used for both the inshore and offshore reef restorations/enhancements.

We are working with Omega Protein to sink a 176 foot pogy boat "The Great Wicomico". Final environmental cleaning is currently being conducted and is scheduled to be deployed sometime in October.

Finfish Bureau - The data for the charter boat and commercial finfish recovery report programs for EDRP I and EDRP II is being verified and reviewed so assessments can be made. Fisheries personnel participated in a Casting for Conservation kids fishing tournament on Sept. 12 at River Park in Pascagoula with over 100 kids participating. Personnel assisted with fish identification,

knot tying, casting, boat and water safety, and bait distribution. These tournaments utilize EDRP II public outreach funds.

New recreational fishing records for August-September of 2009.

Conventional Fishing Tackle:

Atlantic Sharpnose Shark 10lbs. 4.16 oz.
Finetooth Shark 22 lbs. 9.66 oz.

Fly-fishing Tackle:

Remora 2 lbs. 13.76 oz.
Vermillion Snapper 2 lbs. 5.12 oz.
Yellowfin Tuna 13 lbs. 12.96 oz.
Lane Snapper 1 lb. 0.88 oz.
Greater Amberjack 26 lbs. 7.36 oz.
King Mackerel 27 lbs. 6.4 oz.
Atlantic Sharpnose Shark 10 lbs. 6.24 oz.
Tripletail 16 lbs. 11.84 oz.
Blacktip Shark 55 lbs. 0.32 oz.
Spinner Shark 106 lbs. 0.8 oz.
Rock Hind 1 lb 5.44 oz.

Louisiana – **J. Shepard** presented a report on behalf of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF).

Hurricane Recovery Programs - The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) are still actively engaged in hurricane damage assessment and recovery following Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike. In the wake of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the Department has identified funds within the first EDRP grant to reprogram into cooperative research to monitor recovery of the fishing industries. A survey of commercial harvesters and wholesale/retail dealers has been developed to help characterize the long-term effects of the hurricanes on their operations. Those include the types of effects, and the costs associated with repair or replacement and lost revenues. The purpose of this survey is to help understand the fisheries recovery factors that need to be addressed, and in what priority, after a catastrophic event.

Finfish - Louisiana opened and closed recreational red snapper season with creel and size limits consistent with Federal regulations.

Louisiana established rules for harvest of shark consistent with those in EEZ waters. However, commercial state-permitted shark harvesters would be allowed 33 Large Coastal Shark per vessel, with one trip per day. Likewise, federally-permitted vessels would be limited to one trip per day (not limited in Federal regulations).

Louisiana established rules for harvest of gray triggerfish and greater amberjack that are consistent with those in EEZ waters.

Louisiana continues to examine the life history and fisheries characteristics of species that are experiencing increasing harvest pressures with new regulations (such as gray and vermillion snappers).

The Artificial Reef Program continues to assess and permit reef deployments related to oil and gas structures. The Artificial Reef Program has been very active in accepting new structures into previously permitted Artificial Reef sites. Also, the Program is in the process of re-evaluating its program of Special Artificial Reef Sites (SARS) to ensure clarity of purpose and consistent application and evaluation of sites. Development of inshore artificial reefs in Lake Pontchartrain is in the planning stages, using bridge rubble from the hurricane-damaged I-10 bridge. Planning is also ongoing to enhance other inshore artificial reefs in the Lake Pontchartrain and Terrebonne Parish areas using limestone (Terrebonne Parish) and reef balls (L. Pontchartrain).

The LDWF is collaborating with Southeastern Louisiana University to examine the genetic structure of red drum and spotted seatrout populations within Louisiana's bay systems.

Oyster - The LDWF Oyster Program has recently completed several important management initiatives. In May and June 2009, approximately 500 acres of public oyster reefs were rehabilitated in five areas of the public oyster grounds with approximately 65,000 cubic yards of cultch material (limestone). These projects were funded by NOAA federal disaster programs through the GSMFC and have proven successful as oyster spat sets have been documented through biological sampling of these rehabilitated reefs. Additionally, approximately 40,000 acres of Mississippi Sound is being side-scanned to identify and map shrimp and oyster habitat. Lastly, the oyster season on the public grounds was recently opened (September 9) and heavy oyster harvest was documented on public oyster reefs which had been previously rehabilitated with cultch material back in 2007. Despite successful harvest on these rehabilitated reefs, annual oyster stock assessment sampling on additional public reefs in July 2009 showed a slim resource throughout much of the public oyster areas.

Shrimp/Crab - Marine Debris removal efforts continue in coastal Louisiana focusing on the fishing grounds. Four hundred square miles of coastal water bottoms in Breton Sound, Lake Pontchartrain Middle Grounds, Lake St Catherine, Calcasieu Lake and Vermilion/Cote Blanche Bays and Barataria/Caminada Bays have been cleaned of debris through the Department's contract with Crowder-Gulf Joint Venture. LDWF continues to work with the LA Recovery Authority (LRA), the LA Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) and Governors Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP), federal agencies and local and parish officials and community and fishing organizations to identify the locations of underwater obstructions which are fouling the fishing grounds or access channels used by fishing vessels.

The Crustacean Program anticipates greatly increasing samples within portions of Breton and Chandeleur Sounds to complement current SEAMAP sampling.

Governor Jindal created the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force by Executive Order on August 31. Task Force membership is drawn from executive staff from the offices of the Governor and Attorney General, the departments of Wildlife and Fisheries, Health and Hospitals, Agriculture and Forestry, Economic Development, the Louisiana Recovery Authority and Workforce Commission, and representatives of the shrimp industry. They are charged with examining the Louisiana shrimp industry as a whole, identifying areas of concern or problems endemic to the industry, and developing plans or proposing policies which can improve the economic sustainability of the industry. The Crustacean Program has also been heavily involved in facilitating proceedings of the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force and those of the Shrimp Harvester and Shrimp Processor Advisory Panels to the task force.

Rulemaking procedures have been initiated which would expand the current window by which businesses operating under a "Special Live Bait Dealers Permit" may take live shrimp and live croaker during closed shrimp season.

Rulemaking procedures have been initiated which would establish a 10 day crab trap closure in a portion of the upper Barataria Basin for purposes of removing abandoned crab traps.

Data Management - GulfFIN programs (MRFSS, Biological Sampling, Trip Tickets) are going along as expected. However, insufficient funding for 2010 will require us to drop biological sampling.

We've developed, tested and are now distributing an electronic reporting system for the recreational for-hire industry. Use of the electronic reporting system is voluntary and provided free to anyone that wants to use it. At this time approximately 25 copies have been distributed.

Research - Our new Fisheries Research Laboratory on Grand Isle opened for business on July 1, 2009. The 23 million dollar state of the art facility will be used to conduct research needed by the department and provide a platform for cooperative research with universities.

Habitat - The Corps completed closure of the MRGO in July. Work continues on the restoration plan for the surrounding area, including the modeling effort for the Violet diversion.

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

Regulatory Issues

License / Fees Increases

In late May, TPWD Commissioners approved increases to hunting and fishing licenses, as well as boat titling and registration fees. Most fees were increased by five percent, and all increases took effect on 1 September 2009.

Regulation Changes

Guides who utilize paddle crafts (canoes, kayaks) in salt water now have a new license option, an All-Water Paddle Craft Guide License. A person may qualify for this license by completing an approved series of kayak training courses, along with CPR/First Aid, and a TPWD boater safety course. A Paddle Craft guide who does not utilize motorized vessels is not required to have a U.S. Coast Guard Operator's License.

New saltwater fishing regulations that took effect on 1 September 2009:

For flounder, the recreational daily bag limit decreased from 10 to 5 fish, and the commercial bag limit from 60 to 30 fish. During the month of November, hook and line anglers will be permitted to take 2 flounder per day, with take by all other gears is prohibited. Possession limit cannot exceed the daily bag limit.

For sharks, the minimum total length for most species increased from 24 inches to 64 inches. However, the minimum for Atlantic sharpnose, Blacktip, and Bonnethead sharks remain at 24 inches total length. A prohibited list was established for the 21 species: Atlantic angel, Basking, Bigeye sand tiger, Bigeye six gill, Bigeye thresher, Bignose, Caribbean reef, Caribbean sharpnose, Dusky, Galapagos, Longfin mako, Narrowtooth, Night, Sandbar, Sand tiger, Seven gill, Silky, Six gill, Smalltail, Whale, and White. For allowable shark species, the bag limit remains one shark per person per day, with a two shark possession limit.

Limits changed for the following species, with possession limit set at twice the daily bag limit: For greater amberjack, the minimum total length changed from 32 inches to 34 inches. Gray triggerfish now have a minimum total length of 16 inches and a daily bag limit of 20 fish per person. Gag grouper have a minimum total length of 22 inches and a daily bag limit of 2 fish per person.

Menhaden Total Allowable Catch

In 2008, the TPW Commission established a total allowable catch (TAC) limit on gulf menhaden caught in the Texas Territorial Sea and commercially landed in Louisiana. The TAC went into effect on 1 September 2008 and was set at the previous 5-year (2002-2006) average of 31.5 million pounds per year. The 2009 fishing season is the first fishing season this regulation applies. As of 27 September 2009, 225 sets had been made in Texas waters landing 13.7 million pounds, which represents 43.4% of the Texas TAC.

Coastal Fisheries Programs & Projects

Life History Research – PRBMFRS

Otolith and gonad samples were collected for alligator gar from the Cedar Lakes area for a preliminary reproductive biology study.

Gray snapper samples were collected and processed for a life history study.

Routine otolith collections from red drum caught in gill net samples continues.

The GSMFC funded FIN-Biological Sampling project for otolith collection and processing for various marine species was continued.

PRBMFRS Genetics Research for **GSMFC's Technical Coordinating Committee**

Fin clip sample collection and processing for southern flounder and alligator gar genetic variation studies are continuing.

A cooperative effort with Texas A&M University at Galveston, involving the confirmation of species identification for snook species collected in Texas waters, was completed.

Red drum fin clip collections for a genetics project conducted by Dr. John Gold, Texas A&M University is continuing.

Species identification was conducted on shrimp provided by NOAA law enforcement to determine if truth in labeling regulations were followed by seafood wholesalers.

Planning for a project to track oyster disease severity using Quantitative Real-time Polymerase Chain Reaction was conducted.

Artificial Reef Project

TPWD completed 4 reefing projects with Resolve Marine Services through a settlement agreement for the Texas Clipper ship project. Projects included: 1) Cleaning the tugboat *Coschecton* of all hazardous materials and reefing the vessel at a TPWD nearshore reef site in Port Mansfield; 2) reefing over 800 concrete culverts around the *Coschecton* tugboat; and 3) reefing over 2,400 tons of concrete bridge materials from the Humble Channel Bridge at the TPWD Matagorda Island reef site. The cost of these projects to TPWD was \$450,000, but valued at over \$1 million value.

The list of petroleum companies that are interested in reefing at TPWD sites continues to grow. In the last six months, 4 petroleum platforms and 6 individual leg sets have been reefed at TPWD artificial reef sites.

A Coastal Impact and Assessment Program grant from Minerals Management Service has been approved and an interagency contract between the GLO and TPWD is being drafted. This 3-year grant totals \$1.5 million and will be used for nearshore reefing projects.

Private groups have begun participation in the nearshore reefing program. Coastal Conservation Association has move concrete and quarry stone to a staging area for deployment at the George Vancouver Liberty Ship reef, offshore Freeport, and REEFMAN, LLC deployed 15 engineered reefs at the same site.

Seventy five 1-ton quarry blocks were reefed at Sabine Reef making this the first materials placed at the site since it has been permitted many years ago.

Discussions with the US Navy on planning the up righting of the Texas Clipper ship have ended. The ship is functioning well as a reef and may serve out the rest of its time on its side. Biological monitoring on the ship continues through a contract with UT-Brownsville.

Buyback Programs

Inshore Shrimp Buyback Program

Inshore shrimp buyback round # 24 application period closed on March 13, 2009; it was open for approximately 45 days. During this round, 64 individual bids were received and a total of 35 (17 bay and 18 bait) licenses were purchased at a total cost of \$275,540. The average purchase price was \$7,873.

Shrimp - Overall totals since 1996

- 2,013 licenses purchased
- 1,013 bay licenses and 1000 bait licenses
- Total cost of \$13.2 million
- Average price over all rounds = \$6,557
- 2,013 / 3,231 original licenses = 62%

Crab Buyback Program

Crab buyback round #10 application period closed on March 13, 2009 during which 10 applications were received and 2 licenses were accepted at a total cost of \$18,000 and an average cost of \$9,000.

Crab - Overall totals since 2001

- 42 licenses purchased
- Total cost of \$2,42,049
- Average price over all rounds = \$5,763
- 42 / 287 original licenses = 15% of total

Finfish Buyback Program

Finfish buyback round #13 application period closed on March 13, 2009 during which 21 applications received and 14 licenses were accepted at a total cost of \$109,850 and an average of \$7,846.

Finfish - Overall totals since 2002

- 204 licenses purchased
- Total cost of \$1,100,650
- Average price over all rounds = \$5,395
- 204 / 549 original licenses = 37%

Fish Stocking Efforts

In mid-May, Coastal Fisheries made history when Sea Center Texas staff stocked about 760 southern flounder in Old River Bayou, Bridge City. Although TPWD has stocked southern flounder a few times in Aransas Bay, this is the first time TPWD has spawned, incubated, raised, and stocked its own southern flounder.

2009 Production Totals

Red Drum = 11,765,416

Spotted Seatrout = 2,574,909

Flounder = 4,335

Oysters

In mid-August, Coastal Fishery's Oyster Mapping and Restoration Team began oyster reef restoration efforts in Galveston Bay. After collecting and assessing side scan sonar/ bathymetry data of a proposed restoration site, they marked the corners of the project's desired 20-acre site in East Bay. A total of nine barges, each carrying approximately 2,000 tons (over 12,000 cubic yards) of cultch material were evenly deployed at the site. Staff also completed Phase I of a community-based oyster habitat restoration project in Galveston Bay. Ten small pads totaling 2.5 acres were constructed along the San Leon shoreline in close proximity to private piers to enhance fishery habitat along the shoreline. Funding for this project came from a USFWS Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership grant and TPWD Kills & Spills restitution funds.

Also in mid-August, staff met with oyster leaseholders to discuss transplant dates and new regulations. A report on the Vibrio Management Plan, and its impact on the oyster industry, was given by the Health Department. Beginning next summer, the harvest of oysters for the half-shell market will be under rigorous controls that will change the dynamics of this fishery. A meeting is planned for October 2009 to discuss Vessel Monitoring Systems as an option for allowing harvest before sunrise when water temperatures are lower which would aid commercial oyster leaseholders in meeting time-temperature controls.

Inshore Shrimp

Coastwise aerial inshore shrimp boat counts taken on May 14th and 15th totaled 179 vessels, up from last year's count of 65 vessels but below the 15-year average of 435 vessels.

Coastwise opening day bay shrimp boat counts conducted on August 15th and 16th counted a total of 197 boats, which is the largest opening day count since 2006 (213), but below the 15-year average of 576. Marine diesel is about half the cost from this time last year, but shrimp prices were down. At the time, jumbo shrimp's wholesale price was \$0.65/lbs.

Turtles

On 27 July 2009, Donna Shaver at Padre Island National Seashore reported a record 196 nesting's of Kemp's Ridley sea turtles were counted on Texas beaches, one more than the previous record of 195 set last year. This year in Texas, 117 nesting's have been reported at Padre Island National Seashore, far more than any other Texas location. However, turtle

nesting's have also been reported at spots like South Padre Island (33), Boca Chica Beach (9), Matagorda Island (7), San Jose Island (4), Brazoria County (3), Galveston Island (3), and other locations.

Special Efforts, Studies, and Topics

The North Deer Island Restoration and Protection project was awarded the Coastal America Award for 2009. This is the only coastal stewardship award administered by the President's Office. North Deer Island is the largest colonial water bird rookery on the Upper Texas Coast. Up to 30,000 pairs of birds nest on the island annually, including the endangered brown pelican. The project armored over 7,000 feet of shoreline with limestone to prevent ongoing erosion and restored 10 acres of the island's marshes and rookery habitat.

In August 2009, Coastal Fisheries' Hazardous Algae Bloom Response Team reported a red tide occurred just offshore of South Padre Island. Participants in a Texas International Fishing Tournament complained of eye/nose/throat irritations when they were just a few miles offshore from Port Isabel. A NOAA bulletin indicated a high chlorophyll in that area at that time. In mid-September, increasing numbers of *Karenia brevis* were observed in Port Aransas and streaks of discolored water were observed in Corpus Christi Bay, and fishermen reported a fish kill in the upper Laguna Madre. In mid-October samples confirmed the presence of *Karenia brevis* along South Padre Island.

Other

In mid-June, experts representing government, university, private and non-profit organizations gathered in Corpus Christi to review 10 years of work in public and boater education, scientific research, and management actions to protect sea grasses. TPWD, Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, and Port of Corpus Christi Authority jointly hosted the workshop that took a comprehensive look at the accomplishments of the Sea grass Conservation Plan for Texas, created in 1999. Attendees identified goals that have been achieved and brainstormed new goals for the plan.

Collaboration between the Coastal Fisheries and TPWD GIS Lab's Resource Information System (RIS) team resulted in a new online Texas Tarpon Observation Network application (<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/maps/gis/ris/tarpon/index.phtml>). The new Web resource is the first of its kind for the Gulf of Mexico. The intent is to use angler observations to help monitor tarpon occurrences along the Texas coast, augment past and current tarpon research along the coast, and help raise awareness of the popular game fish. The new Web application creates a means for TPWD staff and external customers to query the number and type of tarpon observations using dates, radius from a point based on latitude and longitude, bay name, or coastal area. The application features Google™ Maps allowing for satellite-based layer imagery, and the ability to zoom in, zoom out, and pan to locations of interest.

Live Fuels, Inc., a Texas company located on the Arroyo Aquaculture Association complex in Arroyo City, is attempting to develop a renewable diofuel from algae-fed fish. While current approaches to generating algal-biofuels are resource intensive and face fundamental science and engineering hurdles, Live Fuels' approach is ingenious in its simplicity. By turning natural food chains into productive systems, Live Fuels eliminates many of the costs and risks plaguing other approaches to using algae for biofuels.

Ross Melinchuk has been selected to lead the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's natural resource divisions (Coastal Fisheries, Inland Fisheries, and Wildlife) as Deputy Executive Director for Natural Resources. The Deputy Executive Director for Natural Resources position was created by TPWD's executive director to bring additional scientific, natural resource management and conservation policy expertise to the table to help lead agency divisions facing large-scale conservation challenges that include water resources for people and wildlife, invasive species, climate change, declining and fragmented fish and wildlife habitats, evolving outdoor recreation trends, and others.

In August, a Baytown man died from an infection caused by exposure to *Vibrio vulnificus*. Thomas Shurley, 52, died multiple organ failure following a three-week battle against the infection. He had suffered a scrape on his knee while fishing in Galveston Bay. The bacteria rapidly spread throughout his body, and even the amputation of his leg could not stop it.

This most-viewed video on the TPWD's YouTube channel so far is "TAKE ME FISHING 101: Basic Gear Assembly." The video shows step-by-step how to assemble a fishing rod and tackle. It's one of 11 short videos covering every aspect of how to get started fishing. TPWD other social outlets are Twitter, Face book and Flicker.

Future Meetings

G. Herring reported that the Annual Spring meeting will be held at the Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach, AL. The dates have been changed due to conflicts with spring breakers. We will meet March 8-11, 2010.

The Commission will meet in Florida, October 18-21, 2010. The exact location has not yet been determined.

Publications List

A new listing of publications was provided for informational purposes.

Election of Officers

C. Perret nominated **V. Vail** for Chairman. **D. Diaz** seconded. Without opposition, **V. Vail** was named Chairman for 2009-2010 by acclamation.

J. Gill nominated V. Minton for 1st Vice Chairman. M. Ray seconded. Without opposition, V. Minton was named 1st Vice Chairman by acclamation.

J. Gill nominated M. Ray 2nd Vice Chairman. D. Diaz seconded. Without opposition, M. Ray was named 2nd Vice Chairman by acclamation.

L. Simpson presented a token of appreciation to outgoing Chairman B. Gautreaux. B. Gautreaux presented a gift to incoming Chairman V. Vail.

Other Business

C. Perret presented a proposed resolution in support of Senate Bill 1311, "Gulf of Mexico Restoration and Protection Act". This legislation would expand and strengthen cooperative efforts to monitor, restore, and protect the resource productivity, water quality, and marine ecosystems of the Gulf of Mexico. He discussed the legislation and told the Commissioners that the legislation supports funding to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the Gulf of Mexico Program specifically for the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GMA). This is an alliance of the five Gulf state's governors. Governor Barbour currently serves as chair of the GMA. These funds would be for use by the GMA in the amount of \$10 million increasing to \$25 million in 2012 through 2015. T. Gollott moved to adopt the proposed resolution (attached) and to have the resolution distributed to the Gulf Congressional Delegation and GSMFC Commissioners. J. Gill seconded. T. Gollott amended the motion to allow the resolution to also be presented to the five Gulf States Legislatures for approval and support as well. J. Gill accepted the amendment. The motion was passed.

C. Perret discussed Resolution no. 081809-2 that was recently passed by the Commission of the MDMR. This resolution asks the NMFS and the GMFMC to allow for the harvest of one red drum per person for recreational and charter boat fishermen (exclusive of captain and crew) fishing in the EEZ. After the MDMR passed this resolution, they asked the GSMFC staff distribute the resolution to the other Gulf States for their consideration. He has discussed this resolution with several of the states and would like input from all of the states. C. Densen stated that ADCNR is hesitant to collect data without assurance from NMFS that they would use it. LDWF has not yet presented this information for final consideration. V. Vail reported that this issue has been addressed by the Florida's Division of Marine Fisheries Management and the concept has been presented to the FWC Commissioners. They have not yet taken a position. M. Ray reported that TPWD has not yet taken any action.

D. Diaz revisited the discussion held the previous day regarding impacts of imports on shrimp, particularly low shrimp prices. He moved to have this issue referred to the SF-FFMC for further review. J. Gill seconded. The motion passed.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:55 am.

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Resolution
Gulf of Mexico Legislation

Whereas, the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem provides valuable natural, cultural and economic resources to adjacent states and the nation, such as essential habitat for millions of migrating birds, furbearers, and fisheries that provide ^{30%} of the seafood supply in the lower 48 states;

Whereas, the Gulf of Mexico region ecosystem hosts 90% of America's offshore energy production and 30% of the nations total oil and gas supply;

Whereas, seven of the top ten seaports are located on the Gulf of Mexico, and the Ports of South Louisiana and Houston are two of the busiest ports in the nation by volume;

Whereas, the Mississippi River is the trunk of a 14,500-mile navigation system and the Gulf Intracoastal Water Way is a 15,000-mile navigation system, and both are endangered by the deterioration of that ecosystem;

Whereas, communities with rich cultural histories contribute to a \$20 billion dollar annual tourism industry and provide a work force for the myriad other industries of the Gulf region;

Whereas, the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem's vast resources are at risk from anthropogenic and natural forces that threaten the continued productivity and vitality of the region;

Whereas, restoration and protection of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem is necessary to ensure the continued existence of the valuable resources it provides;

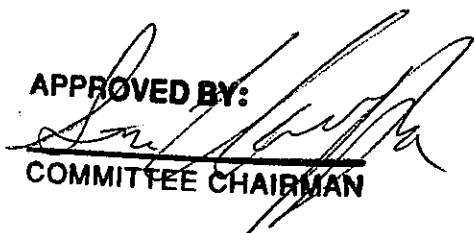
Whereas, approaches to those threats must be coordinated among Federal, state and local government and regional stakeholders to ensure effective and efficient action;

Whereas, other Great Waterbodies have legislatively established programs that ensure such coordination and are funded at levels that are reflective of their importance to the nation;

Whereas, The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission recognizes the importance of the restoration, protection and sustainable management of the Gulf of Mexico and believes the legislative establishment of the Gulf of Mexico Program in a manner consistent with that proposed in S.1311 by Senators Wicker, Landrieu, and Cochran would enhance and strengthen cooperative efforts to protect and restore the Gulf;

Therefore, be it resolved that The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission wholeheartly supports S.1311 the "Gulf of Mexico Restoration and Protection Act" and that this support be conveyed to the Congressional delegations of the Gulf States.

APPROVED BY:


COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**OYSTER TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
MINUTES
October 14 – 16, 2009
New Orleans, LA**

Moderator, **Steve VanderKooy** called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m. The following members and were in attendance:

Members

Brian Lezina, LDWF, Lacombe, LA
Cherie O'Brien, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Mark Berrigan, FDACS, Tallahassee, FL
Steve Geiger, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Bradley Randall, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Priscilla Weeks, Houston Advanced Research Center, Woodlands, TX
John Supan, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
Jason Herrmann, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Walter Keithly, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
Robert Goodrich, TPWD, Austin, TX
Bill Arnold, NOAA Fisheries – SERO, St. Petersburg, FL

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
Ralph Hode, GSMFC, EDRP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Richard Fulford, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Patrick Banks, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Shaye Sable, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Adoption of Agenda

VanderKooy reviewed the agenda and the handouts that were provided in the meeting folders. **VanderKooy** noted that **Lezina** would not be available on Tuesday and that his section would be discussed out-of-order on Wednesday morning. **Supan** moved to accept the agenda with flexibility and **Randall** seconded and the agenda was passed.

Approval of Minutes

December 3-4, 2008 Gulfport, MS – **Supan** moved to approve the minutes as written, **Lezina** seconded and the motion passed.

January 29, 2009 Conference Call – **Randall** moved to approve the minutes as written, **Goodrich** seconded and the motion passed.

February 18, 2009 Conference Call – O'Brien moved to approve the minutes as written, Lezina seconded and the motion passed.

June 22, 2009 Conference Call – Randall moved to approve the minutes as written, O'Brien seconded and the motion passed.

Regional Oyster Stock Assessment Discussion

VanderKooy welcomed **Dr. Rich Fulford** from the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Lab. **Fulford** had offered to explore the models originally provided by Dr. Eric Powell, Director of Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory, Rutgers University. It was hoped that the data available from a couple of reefs or specific areas that had been intensely sampled by the states could be plugged into the models and a rudimentary assessment be generated as a 'proof-of-concept'. The Lake Calcasieu data seemed to be the best set to start with and **Fulford** explored the data with his summer students and has tweaked it since.

Fulford offered a PowerPoint presentation to summarize what he had accomplished with the data provided so far. We are looking at this from the perspective of using a surplus production model to determine a trend through time. **Fulford** highlighted two of the more common models for this type of assessment; the Pella and Tomlinson Model, which predicts biomass as a function of growth rate and carrying capacity and involves the catch history through time. Reference points which are generated are MSY and harvest targets. There was not a good estimate of biomass of the population, so **Fulford** used the second model. The Constant Abundance-surplus production model (Powell et al. 2009) uses population size or N to determine a surplus production. The population size in the previous year adjusted for mortality and new recruits gets you a theoretical population this year and expected for next year. The surplus, what is available for harvest in that year to maintain a constant abundance year after year. **Fulford** strongly recommended that the group read the Powell et al. 2009 companion paper series from Fishery Bulletin, which addresses these models and also looks at the cumulative effects of Dermo on mortality.

Fulford highlighted the data he has at this time and the data he still needs. We have good estimates of population size for market, seed, and spat. We seem to have a handle on the Stock-Recruitment function. There are some estimates of market sized natural mortality (box counts) and assuming a one to one, we have an estimate of seed mortality (box counts). We need to validate or provide a better box disarticulation rate for the model. We need to get a handle on the affect of harvest on seed mortality (differential gear mortality and seed loss on market oysters). The Chesapeake uses a very detailed shell budget, but it is not clear if this is an important exercise in our system. Shell loss is always important and it might be worth looking at in the future here.

Fulford would like to look at the raw square meter data and look at the variability in the data and subsample the data into the Collie-Sissenwine to see how it would fall out in relation to what we have already done. Clearly, these models will need to be ground-truthed to the resource at some point as well. As a 'proof-of concept' this was a successful exercise. There is a lot left to do before the model is sufficiently tuned, but at this time it appears to be working. **Fulford** will

work with the model as the necessary items are provided to refine the results. **VanderKooy** pointed out that the model is not the final answer and certainly not the final assessment for Calcasieu Lake; this is simply an exercise to explore the models used elsewhere with a sample dataset. The recommendations generated will be to direct the states existing fishery dependent and independent sampling programs to get the data required to populate the model. The next step would be to use the model on another subset from another similar area, such as Apalachicola or Galveston, and see if it's successful elsewhere.

The items that **Fulford** had noted early in his presentation as being needs for the model are as follows:

- ✓ Good estimates of population size for market, seed and spat
- ✓ Bypass this partially using C-S model
- ✓ S-R function
- ✓ Estimate of market mortality (box counts)
- ✓ Estimate of seed mortality (box counts)
- Disarticulation rate
- Effect of harvest on seed M
- Shell budget (important at high harvest fraction)
- When survey conducted?
- Growth timeline (spat to seed; seed to market)

Fulford requested the TTF to provide him better estimates for those items not checked. The TTF agreed to provide them no later than **October 30, 2009**. **VanderKooy** will send out a reminder of these items via e-mail and they will be reflected in the minutes along with any other assignments. **VanderKooy** is looking for a complete draft by the end of 2009. Therefore, the tuning of the stock assessment needs to be completed this fall. **Fulford** will continue to work on it as time permits and task force members provide the additional items.

Stock Assessment Placement in the FMP

Arnold pointed out that placement of the assessment was critical at this point. **VanderKooy** noted that when formal stock assessments were completed on other species, the details were often provided in the appendices and a summary of the results was included under Management Considerations or Management Recommendations. **Arnold** offered to develop a section specific to the assessment exercise and provide the background from the Powell papers and presentation as a lead in to **Fulford's** assessment. It was agreed that this new section should precede the recommendations in Section 12. **VanderKooy** will resend to **Arnold** the background information and detailed report from Powell's presentation after the meeting. **Arnold** would like to offer Powell a co-author position on the FMP and the assessment section and will communicate with him to that end.

VanderKooy noted that the assessment would identify the sampling protocols required for any future assessment and those items would be included in the data and research needs.

Assignment Status and Section Updates

VanderKooy reviewed the opening sections and noted that they will continue to be updated as needed. The Table of Contents will be cleaned up as the sections are complete, but that the subsection headings will be corrected when authors indicated they were at a final draft stage.

The last section to be drafted will be the summary Section 1. It will draw a few paragraphs from every section and build an overall picture of the fishery and the FMP. Again, that section will be drafted last.

VanderKooy was asked to provide pagination and dates as a footer in each section draft to help the members keep track of where they are in reviewing. **VanderKooy** will fix each section.

It was mentioned again that much of the literature seemed to be dated and **VanderKooy** was asked to do a literature search for the group of all the new oyster literature since 2000. **VanderKooy** will do a thorough review and provide it to the group ASAP.

***VanderKooy** will send out a CD after this meeting with every draft section. Once you receive the CD please review every section and provide the section author your comments and a drafted narrative that should be added. It is no longer acceptable to simply suggest that something be changed without providing the necessary information of how to make the change.*

Section 3 – Description of Stocks Comprising the Management Unit (MU) and Description of the Habitat

Robinson was unable to attend and there have not been any updates since the last meeting. **VanderKooy** stated that the document was fairly complete from the last meeting and that TTF members should review this section and provide comments directly to **Robinson**. **Geiger** asked about the concept of the Management Unit and noted that nowhere in this section was there any discussion about what makes up a “population”. Is a population a single reef or a bay, or do the individual populations actually overlap and supply each other with genetic material and individuals? **Geiger** is very interested in working with **Robinson** to add more information to the section. **VanderKooy** encouraged anyone with ‘newer’ references that are relevant to any of the sections; provide them to the author for inclusion and **VanderKooy** for distribution to all.

There was some discussion of where any maps need to be included and to what extent the maps are detailed. **VanderKooy** had asked originally for everyone’s GIS data to see if a regional map could be developed. It was generally agreed that since some states couldn’t provide the kind of data required, each state would develop their own maps and attempt to include *all* oyster areas, not just the commercially harvested areas. It may be problematic since some states will have multiple maps to cover all their oyster habitats, but we will decide later how well the maps work. They were included in this section originally, but might be better placed in habitat. Depending on how many maps are generated, they may become an ‘atlas’ in the appendices. **O’Brien** pointed out that her tables provide the acreage per bay system, but not any distribution maps themselves. The tables also provide the specific cited publications where the detailed maps

would be located. For example, a lot of the distributions that TPWD uses are still the original maps by Powell published in the early 90's. Each state rep will develop their own maps for now and provide them to **VanderKooy**. The maps need to be in black and white or grayscale, not color, and hopefully be formatted to standard letter-size paper. Area's that may need more mapping work need to be identified in the recommendations section and/or research and data needs.

Section 4 – Habitat

O'Brien reported she made a few of the changes that were addressed in the February conference call. Those items that were identified, but never followed up by the TTF have been omitted or fixed based on **O'Brien's** best information. She continues to ask for oyster reef acreage data for the tables, but the rest of section 4 continues to be ready for TTF member comment and review. Please provide final edits and data needed for tables to **O'Brien** no later than *Friday, October 30*. **VanderKooy** promised to help figure out the Galstoff (1954) paper and would provide **O'Brien** the complete reference.

There was a lengthy, continued discussion regarding the value of including maps versus detailing the information in the tables. It was generally agreed that we should attempt to include as much detail as we can to map the oysters areas in each state. If the only information available is something like an older published map or a grid system from independent sampling, then that is what needs to be done. The length of the document is not a major concern and if multiple pages are required to provide each states oyster beds, then so be it. Each state representative will try to put representative maps together for their state as best they can. The lack of detailed or current maps will highlight the need for more data and information and will need to be identified in the recommendations or research needs. Again, color will not be an option, but gray-scale or line drawings would be best.

Section 6 – Public Health Concerns Introduction and History

VanderKooy reported that he and **Herrington** have been working on this, but because the ISSC has not yet met, there have been no changes in several months pending that meeting. Please read the section anyway and provide to **Herrington** or **VanderKooy** any changes or suggestions that you might have; remembering that the section may change dramatically after the ISSC meeting. The NSSP continues to change, but will be current at the time of publication. **Supan** suggested that the section should be addressing how public health contributes to management of the resource and less about the 'plans' themselves since they will continue to change. Everyone should read the section broadly and whittle the draft down to the management application and provide a rearrangement if necessary. If there are specifics on any 'plans' for the states, it could be included in detail in the appendices. *Vibrio* discussion was moved or should be moved into marine biotoxin discussion as a broad discussion with less detail on the program and the *Vibrio* plan specifically. **Supan** will make a trip to Ocean Springs, if necessary, to help with this section following the ISSC meeting. **VanderKooy** noted that the descriptions of growing areas (the NSSP Guidelines definitions) will reside here and instead of repeating them for each states enforcement section, the readers should be referred back to this section anytime later in the

document. Again, please read the section and provide to **Herrington** or **VanderKooy** any changes or suggestions that you might have for this section.

Section 7 – Fishery Management Jurisdiction

VanderKooy reported on the enforcement section. **VanderKooy** needs everyone to read the first half of this section and provide any deletions of Federal Acts or legislation that does not apply to oysters and add any that have been left out. **O'Brien** will provide some additional legislation information related to permitting and navigational waterways. Nationwide permits are covered under Clean Water Act, but some programs have transplant requirements elsewhere.

To date, all the states have provided their background information for the state specific information the marine agency on (Section 7.2 and following). The only information that is still missing is from a couple of health departments. **VanderKooy** actually added the Alabama health department section and it was approved by the department. The Texas health department information was provided, but was in no detail and provided internet links to the specific code for Texas. **VanderKooy** reported that this may be all we were able to get from the health departments, but it is better than nothing. None of the state sections will look exactly alike; because some states will require more or less information depending on what each agency does related to oyster management. Each state representative should review their respective section and update anything like license *costs/structure* and provide the history of significant regulation changes (last 25-30 years) that would help interpret the landings data in the fisheries section, Section 8. Keep in mind that the *number* of licenses sold should go in the next section as well.

VanderKooy needs the state reps to handle getting the information for the health department if it's missing. If the agency won't provide it, the rep should try to gather it even if it's from the internet. We are running short on time so each state needs to be sure this gets accomplished.

Section 8 – Description of Fishery Activities

VanderKooy reviewed the changes to the fisheries section since **VanHoose** retired from Alabama. **VanderKooy** had added and expanded a lot of the background history of the commercial oyster fishery in the US. **VanderKooy** also spent some time developing the history for the state of Florida, but it still needs some review. Each of the other Gulf States need to update their own sections for both commercial and recreational fishing and include the total license sales and participation when available, specifics on landings over time and by gear if important, and any changes in how the state fisheries were prosecuted which may have lead to changes in the overall landings. **Herrmann** is picking up where **VanderKooy** and **VanHoose** left off, but cannot be expected to write all the states sections since he's still trying to catch-up with Alabama's fishery. The state representatives should send their drafted information directly to **Herrmann**.

VanderKooy also provided the total US landings for eastern oysters as well as all oyster species in an effort to highlight the importance of the Gulf's landings overall and is provided in tables and figures. The individual states may include their significance in the total oyster production as well as the eastern oyster production. All this data is available from the NMFS website.

When looking at the trends in state landings, each rep should evaluate if there are known factors which may explain significant changes in the landings from year-to-year. The history of closures may not be all that useful, but if it can be tied to long-term trends seen in the landings; it may still be worth trying to provide for interpretation. It may be more helpful to highlight periods of drought and high river discharge that might have affected the number of fishing days. *Again, all these need to be drafted into the state drafts and provided to **Herrmann** for inclusion.*

Somewhere in this section we might need to identify what each state uses as a standard measure for a sack. Each state is different and therefore a table would be helpful to identify each. In addition, the NMFS has always used a conversion for sacks to weights in meats. **Banks** has a conversion which they have always used and will provide it to the task force after the meeting.

Each state rep will need to evaluate and draft anything related to a recreational or 'non-commercial' fishery. This will not include 'oyster gardening' because it is expressly NOT for harvesting. **Supan** will be covering this topic in the Aquaculture Appendix (Section 17).

Leasing will be the last section of this chapter. Each state will need to provide the details of their lease programs in drafted narrative to **Herrmann**. The history of leasing and specifics on how leasing works in each state should be addressed.

Section 9 – Description of Oyster Processing, Marketing/Distribution and Trade Organizations and Section 10 – Description of Economic Characteristics

Keithly handed out his draft of Section 10. Changes and comments were provided directly on the section draft and will be available to everyone via the website and provided on CD with the other materials.

Keithly has covered the basic economics, starting with production. Much of the landings information is the same as what is in Section 8 and may need to be eliminated or combined in some way with the other section. All of **Keithly's** information is specific to eastern oysters. Dockside values are added by state and everything goes back as far as 1960. **Keithly** has tried to interpret the affects of *Vibrio* on the public perception on long-term prices starting in the early 90s. Changes in supply may have buffered the effects since production was lower at that time naturally keeping demand up. Increases in other areas, including imports, contributed to the reduction of price of Gulf oysters. Processing activities need to be completed and then **Keithly** will draft the section on 'post-harvest' treatments and 'non-fishery' value of oysters. There may be some discussion about price differences based on perception of quality and origin of market oysters (Pacific vs. Gulf vs. Chesapeake).

Weeks noted that there was a substantial discussion of the economics of leased water-bottoms and user group conflicts. It was agreed that while this is about the 'value' of the lease, it should definitely be included in the sociology section as a user group issue as well. **Weeks** also asked about the commitment of the harvesters to specific docks or processors. This has never been as common in the oyster fishery as it once was in shrimp fishery. However, it is common for processors or leaseholders to hire out their boats to harvesters to work for them. Leaseholders

must keep close eye on their contracted harvesters to be sure they harvest in the correct areas and other contract harvesters don't mistakenly harvest their lease. This can contribute to user group conflicts and the familial relations will be included in **Week's** section.

Katrina affects in Alabama and Mississippi might need to be addressed especially post-recovery. Alabama has had a hard time with the drought and drills the last year which might need covering. **Herrmann** and **Randall** will provide any information to **Keithly** to help.

Keithly needs to explore importation into the U.S. and region and the product form. **Keithly** will also look at the processing and marketing issues (Section 9) along with distribution channels for Gulf oysters outside of the region, i.e. to the Chesapeake and the effects of California's actions in recent years. He may end up combining the two sections, if necessary.

Keithly reviewed the tables and figures generated so far and the comments were provided directly on the graphs. *VanderKooy reminded everyone that it's best to start with grayscale and patterns rather than color since they will have to be that way for final publication. All landings and values in all sections will be consistent through 2008.*

Section 11 – Social and Cultural Characteristics of Oyster Fishermen and Their Communities

Weeks had a few requests of the TTF members since the conference call in June and needs more information from the states on a couple items highlighted in the section. **Weeks** discussed the non-family business interactions. In the original FMP there was some discussion regarding the kinship relationships in the fishery and that family was no longer participating and moving into the 'family business'. The non-family/patron-client relationships were a web of community involvement in the past, but do they still exist? How much of the harvesting sector and processing sector is now dominated by recent immigrant and transient labor? There seems to be a lot of ethnographic information that has not been published since the early 70's. Most of the responses that **Weeks** has gotten from task force members has been anecdotal and if there is any way to capture this, please offer suggestions. It was suggested that a survey tool might be useful. Since the 2005 hurricanes, the industry people seem to participate a lot more in agency activities, simply because they believe they have the potential for more relief funds eventually being distributed. The state reps might be able to communicate the survey with their industry people and get more of an oral history. Traci Floyd at the MDMR has been working on an oral history of Mississippi's fishing industry in general through the Mississippi Heritage Society. **VanderKooy** will provide **Weeks** with Traci's contact information.

Weeks will develop a short survey and send it out to the members and also generate a list of conflicts and send that out as well. Weeks would like to have back initial comments back from the TTF members by October 15. This will not be a mail out survey. The expectation is that the TTF member will provide answers from their perspective and then contact individually a few industry reps or the Sea Grant agents in each area to talk with Weeks directly in a phone interview.

There have been a lot of examples of using fishermen recently through the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP), but it is all related to the hurricanes. Any other examples of cooperative research with the industry by any state would be helpful outside of the hurricane-type activities. **Ralph Hode**, GSMFC's EDRP Coordinator, noted a few of those items and would provide a short narrative to **Weeks** on those state hurricane activities.

Section 11.7.1 Acute Stressors is a list of long-term issues in the industry. **Weeks** needs examples of oil spills/petroleum issues, HABs, drought, hurricanes, and other stressors to fill in the discussion of this section. Health department closures are stressors for fishermen, but the closures are the results of point and nonpoint pollution and rainfall. This is also a chronic problem. *Norovirus* and diseases can also cause stress in the industry through closures and recalls. **Randall** will provide more information on the *Norovirus* issue in Mississippi.

Section 11.7.2 Chronic Stressors. There was considerable discussion regarding the loss of working waterfronts as a major chronic stress. Does this actually result in a loss of fishermen or is it simply the evolution of these waterfront areas as fishermen leave the fishery first? **Keithly** pointed out that stress was related to the economics; is there a cost of input by fishermen to participate because of the loss or is there a loss in product value because of the loss of docks, ice houses, and/or processors? Social stresses can be perceived problems and are not just realized problems. Apalachicola and Cedar Key, Florida are good examples of real job loss. **Supan** will review the past minutes from the Louisiana Trade Association Minutes to see what the main concerns were historically and if they ever changed over time (1962-present). **Supan will get those minutes to Weeks when he gets permission for her to review them.** **Supan** noted the same issues seemed to come up regularly and wonders if there is a way to plot those issues and that they would reflect the seed production in the state.

Lezina pointed out that some of the small fishing communities in Louisiana has been lost due to the building of levees to protect the overall community and those fishermen living in those areas have had to move or begin to trailer their vessels. These are small isolated occurrences, but they are definitely a problem for certain industries. **Weeks** will contact him for more information.

VanderKooy reminded everyone that the conference call on Weeks section was back in June and a lot of the items that were requested by Weeks at that time, never materialized from the TTF. Please review individual assignments in ALL sections and provide the authors with the necessary information in a timely fashion to keep the revision moving forward.

Section 5 – Threats to Survival

Lezina added a few items from the last meeting, but the introductory information is ready for serious review, so please send comments and more recent publications to **Lezina** for inclusion. The MSX in the Gulf could be addressed even though there are some concerns over the methodology in that particular publication. There was a rebuttal to the paper and **Supan** will provide a copy to **Lezina**.

The next conference call will be dedicated to Section 5 so **Lezina** has a chance to wrap up the section. *VanderKooy will schedule it the week of October 26-30 and send out the call*

information as the date gets closer. *Lezina* will provide his final draft to the TTF prior to the webinar and if everyone reads it ahead of time, we can complete the section and leave it alone until the final review.

Section 13 – Management Considerations and Specific Management Recommendations

With the addition of a stock assessment section, now called Section 12, the numbering of this section changes also.

Berrigan has received no additional comments on his section since the last meeting and feels that the recommendations should not be touched until everything else is written. **Berrigan** is not comfortable developing these recommendations on his own without input from everyone else. He reiterated that everyone needs to read the section and provide whatever he needs to add **ASAP**. **Berrigan** keeps getting stuff that he knows needs to go in, but he does not know enough about the specifics to do it himself. For example, the Louisiana newsletter “WaterLogged” has ten items that need to be moved into this section. **Supan** will look it over and make any necessary additions. **O’Brien** sent a number of items, specific to Texas, to **Berrigan** for inclusion and she will help him incorporate it.

The new stock assessment section will highlight a lot of the deficiencies in the current data collection programs related to oysters that will be needed to complete any future stock assessments. Those will become recommendations once the assessment is finished and also be in **Section 14 Research and Data Needs**. It may be worth including at least a short summary discussion regarding the ecosystem approach to management. The problem is the poor amount of data that is really required to manage using these models. The Gulf is a long way from ecosystem management, as is the rest of the U.S. We probably need to discuss where oysters fall into the ecosystem and broadly discuss how the ecosystem management models work and leave it at that. This might be discussed in concept in the stock assessment section and provide some items under data needs for the next time we revise the FMP. **VanderKooy** will check if there is any mandate in the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act on ecosystem management. If there is not an official mandate, there may be no need to spend much time on it.

Read the section and provide anything that would be useful for examples for each area related to your own state. Berrigan needs the background materials. The value of this FMP is that it is already published and we need to draft the direction we need to go in each state. Having the FMP allows the biologist to go to the legislature and show where a management need has already been identified.

Section 14 – Research and Data Needs

As always, VanderKooy noted that this section was primarily for the purpose of identifying the things that need to be done regarding research. It identifies data gaps, other issues, and concerns like stock assessment, would be appropriate. Everyone needs to review this section and determine what needs to come out and what needs to be added to this list. Some categories have already been addressed since the original FMP and have been removed or need to be updated. All changes need to be sent to VanderKooy for inclusion.

Section 15 Plan Review

This is purely boilerplate and needs no discussion.

Section 16 References

VanderKooy still needs the original references that are cited in each section. As you draft, please make hardcopies or e-mail PDFs of the references to **VanderKooy** for inclusion in the GSMFC library database.

Section 17.1 Glossary

Remember to highlight any terms that you have in your sections and feel like should be included in the glossary along with a good working definition. You can hold onto them until the section is complete or e-mail them to **VanderKooy** for incorporation.

Section 17.3 - Aquaculture/Mariculture

Supan provided his latest draft to the group and has pretty much completed the section. Genetics on triploids have been added along with more detail on the various techniques available for culture. There is discussion about breeding in resistance to disease, effluent of production facilities, and finally, there is a section on the pros and cons of oyster gardening. **Supan** will take any and all comments from the group as he wraps this section up.

Supan has taken the time to define a 'lease' in Louisiana and if everyone likes it, it can be lifted and used elsewhere in the plan or be referred to here. There was a discussion regarding sovereignty of the land versus land use without ownership in definitions elsewhere. *The TTF needs to read this section and evaluate the definition and see if it meets their states definition.*

This section is virtually complete so everyone should read it and provide final comments to **Supan** directly.

Other Business

VanderKooy will send out all the drafts on CD to the TTF members for their review. Please send all comments and necessary text to the authors and let them finish their sections. **Robinson** will have to let everyone know where his section stands and **Geiger** will communicate with **Robinson** and see if he can contribute to the section. **VanderKooy** will include the latest draft on the CD.

Everyone needs to read the sections. **VanderKooy** noted the timeline has been pushed back a number of times and we need to get to a final draft by the end of the year on the majority of the sections. We are close now. **VanderKooy** proposed to have the group meet in St. Petersburg, Florida (or Lake Tahoe) in early to mid January to draft the Management Recommendations and start the final edit on the rest of the document. Any sections that need more time can be handled by conference call/webinar after that until it is complete. **VanderKooy** would like to have a

final draft by the beginning of summer to send out for review by the Technical Coordinating Committee.

With no further business, Lezina made the motion to adjourn, the motion was seconded by Randall and the group adjourned at 11:51 a.m.



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Joint Artificial Reef Subcommittees Meeting

October 27 - 28, 2009

St. Petersburg, Florida

Summary

Tuesday, October 27, 2009

ASMFC Subcommittee (and Associated) Present: Hugh Carberry (NJ DFW), Marty Gary (MD DNR), Bill Horn (FL FWC), Bob Martore (SC DNR), Mike Meier (VMRC), Keith Mille (FL FWC), Mark Rousseau (MA DMF), Jeff Tinsman (DNREC), Erik Zlokovitz (MD DNR)

GSMFC Subcommittee (and Associated) Present: Kevin Anson (AL DCNR), Kerwin Cuevas (MS DMR), Herb Leedy (MMS), Doug Peter (LA DMR), Dale Shively (TX PWD)

Staff Present: James Ballard (GSMFC), Nancy Marcellus (GSMFC), Jessie Thomas-Blate (ASMFC)

Visitors Present: Mike Bailey (NOAA Fisheries), Michael Barnette (NMFS), Angela Collins (FWRI), George Frankel (Eternal Reefs), Bill Huth (University of West Florida), Bill Limburg (University of Florida), Bill Maxwell (NJ DFW), Madeleine McNamara (USCG), Tim Mullane (American Marine), Brooke Shipley (TX PWD), Kate Winters (MMS)

8:30 Call to Order – Dale Shively

Dale welcomed everyone to the 2009 Joint Artificial Reefs Subcommittee meeting. Everyone went around the table and introduced themselves.

8:45 Development of the Steinhatchee Fisheries Management Area – William Lindberg

Bill Lindberg noted that he planned to broaden his talk to information that he would be presenting at a conference in a few weeks. He wanted to discuss the ecological theory that underlies some of the debates over artificial reefs. He is then going to discuss the application of that theory. If he has time, he will discuss artificial reefs as they relate to snapper-grouper management.

In 2000, Bill Siemen published a book that was developed from some workshops. Artificial reefs are most often designed with general objectives. However, people really should refine the objectives and be more specific and intentional in artificial reef design. He noted that everyone was familiar with the attraction versus production issue with regard to artificial reefs. He wanted

to address that issue from a philosophical perspective. This discussion is part of a class that he teaches. He will discuss the role of criticism in science.

The philosophers that studied critical thinking noted that people tend to address a question, gather information, and make assumptions. In a book by Gordon Cooper (Chapter 2), he talks about the roots of controversy in ecology. Cooper is a behavioral ecologist who noted that we all subscribe to a particular school of thought. Most of the proponents for artificial reefs come from a marine biology context, where organismal and evolutionary biology are prominent areas of thought. However, the folks that are against artificial reefs come from a different framework.

Bill L. noted that he has good friends that think that the issues of attraction versus production are resolved. Some say that it is resolved on the attraction side, and others think it is resolved on the production side. He thinks of the issue as a rubics cube, where you may have some side solved with a set of assumptions, but if you look at it from another side those assumptions do not hold true. How we utilize artificial reefs depends on multiple points of view and good judgment.

Bill L. noted that patch dynamics play into this thought process. Artificial reefs are tools for management. Stock assessment models are used to forecast the effects of management. They have a lot of theoretical background. There would be stronger arguments in support of artificial reefs if we had more theoretical background information. Often, scientists do not adequately define the domain of the study that they are conducting (i.e., narrow or ecosystem-level perspective). Someone schooled in population dynamics will assume that people are talking on a large scale. However, most work has concentrated on production at a particular location. The connection between the different scales of study is often not addressed. Pickett et al. (1994), Cooper (2003), and Lakatos and Musgrave (1970) have philosophical readings on this topic.

Bill L. noted habitat selection theory that applies to artificial reefs. Ideal Free Distribution (Fretwell) says that, given broad assumptions of having ideal knowledge about the distribution of organisms, the organisms should distribute themselves so they can equilibrate their fitness according to the habitat available. There is also Density-Dependent Habitat Selection, and Ontogenetic Habitat Shifts. These theoretical rules tell us how we expect animals to behave.

Bill L. has been looking at gag grouper in artificial reefs to examine some of these theories. The Suwannee Regional Reef System and Steinhatchee Fisheries Management Area are the research sites that he will be talking about. The young gag grouper jump around the natural landscape in the nearshore area. It is a spatially stage-structured population. They are looking at juvenile age classes, which are subject to fishing pressure. Ultrasonic telemetry movement studies were used to examine the population. They are resident on the reef long enough for it to contribute to their growth. They utilize structure when they are threatened. Gag grouper can exhibit homing behavior from 2 to 3 km away. When they emigrate, some join the spawning stock, and others move farther into the western Gulf (demonstrating a possible metapopulation dynamic).

Bill L. noted that given a choice, the gag grouper will select the larger reef. However, their growth rate is better on a smaller reef. Their selection of habitat is for the physical structure provided by the habitat, and they will sacrifice growth to be located near more structure. Gag grouper are naturally gregarious, and occur at high densities. They have a home range. Their distribution also depends on the distribution of their prey. Habitat effects growth, and growth determines subsequent reproductive potential. Habitat plays a major role in the ultimate reproduction of juveniles. Predators may also influence density. When the density drops, the treatment effect gets below a threshold where it can be detected.

Reefs that have published locations will be found more quickly, but the reefs will be found eventually no matter what, and fishing will decrease the biomass. Bill L.'s strategy is to randomly scatter small artificial reefs to get the biological benefit, but they will not publish the coordinates of the reefs. They were originally going to use 1000 reefs in the area, and now they are planning on 500 reefs to manage enough prey resource. They hope to alleviate a bottleneck in this way.

Bill L. noted that they are monitoring the area. They have learned something about the geographic distribution of gag grouper as a result of the monitoring. Their distribution complicates the analysis. They have done some side-scan sonar to determine the distribution of the naturally occurring hard-bottom in the landscape. They can interpret the quality of the side-scan images as habitat for gag grouper due to their artificial reef studies. They graded them on a five point scale, and then did a census of the fish across the habitat gradient. At the highest complexities, they expected the highest densities. However, they found a high proportion of highly complex habitat with zero, or very few fish. They found that this was a result of fishing behavior.

Over time, fishermen will refine and hone their targeting of populations. They learn where it is no longer profitable to fish, and then they move to another spot. The CPUE shows hyperstability for gag grouper until the population falls off a cliff. The fishing does not show the true abundance as a result. The decline in abundance for the high quality reefs is slower than from the lower quality reefs. Lower quality reefs are abandoned first.

Controlling habitat quality through artificial reefs, they are able to monitor the gag grouper population more effectively. This may be one way that artificial reefs can contribute to our knowledge to support management decisions. Letting the fish spread out does not accomplish anything at a small population due to density dependence that only kicks in at higher densities. The benefits that we would expect to enjoy if we reduce the density might only be helpful when we have exceptionally high year classes.

For their study, they have some concern about lack of a time-zero, effect size, and location. They expect density dependence to kick in as populations increase. The work is underway, but it is not a perfect experiment.

Shipp and Bortone (2009) published a paper on red snapper and artificial reefs. A rebuttal to that article, co-authored by Bill L., was published recently. The original paper looked at the entire population as a whole. The rebuttal notes that economic conditions and fishing controls are what more likely led to the population rebound. He noted that the study discussed in the paper did not look at spatial structuring. The debate has artificial reefs as a central issue, but is looking at too broad a scale to really address artificial reefs appropriately. There is the ecological habitat effect of artificial reefs, and there is the gear effect of artificial reefs. If you analyze the system on a large scale, those two issues get lost in the noise.

This creates a seemingly intractable debate. Caddy (2007), MacCall (1990), Walters and Martell (2004), and Sinclair (1988) are useful resources on this topic. Theory allows us to be more predictable. Theory allows us to clarify concepts, examine assumptions, define domains, and respect different viewpoints.

9:30 Artificial Reef Economics – *William Huth*

Bill Huth was at this meeting last year, and remembered the California Ships to Reefs folks talking about diving demand for artificial reefs. He noted that the economics of reefs goes well beyond the influence of diving.

Bill Huth is working with Ash Morgan on this topic. They are looking at contingent valuation methods for the Oriskany and Vandenberg.

Bill Huth noted that there is a difference between the public and private good. The *public good* is not rivalled, and not excludable. People cannot be prevented from consuming it. He used an example of national defense and also artificial reefs. *Consumer surplus* is the benefit that you get from paying a price that is less than what people are willing to pay for that service. When people make policy decisions, they look at the consumer surplus. When looking at costs and benefits, this is what is examined. There is also a *producer surplus* where producers receive more than they were asking for. You have to add those two surpluses together. The *economic impact* is the expenditure injection that has induced impacts that are multiples of the initial expenditure to produce a total impact measure. This evaluation is done by using programs called Implan and REMI. There are large-scale economic models that use simulation methods to determine economic impact on a broader scale.

Florida has a lot of artificial reefs. MARAD has a lot of inactive vessels. MARAD noted that they have interest in reefing, but that the states do not want to pay for reefing of their ships. Bill Huth discussed the Oriskany. He noted that Alabama is actually very close to the site of the Oriskany, but they did not contribute resources to the sinking of the ship. However, they are benefitting economically from the ship. He noted that there were already many fish on the reef a short time after sinking. Hurricanes caused the Oriskany to sink a bit into the sand, which has changed it from a recreational to a more technical diving experience because it is now deeper. Recreational divers have to spend 26 to 29% less time on each dive as a result. There may be a

benefit to technical divers however, due to the increased depth. In contrast, the Spiegel Grove had a positive economic change as a result of a hurricane because it was rocked upright.

In the past, no one has looked at consumer surplus instead of economic impact with regard to artificial reefs. Morgan, Massey, and Huth (2009) published an article on that topic in the current issue of Marine Resource Economics. They measured the value to divers from creating a multiple ship reefing area for future large ship reefing disposal. Bundling ships may create a significant diving destination.

Morgan et al. (2009) had a web-based survey design. They contacted a number of divers to fill out a survey online. They obtained information on price and quantity to estimate demand. They ran an economic impact model as well. They looked at Escambia and Baldwin counties, and determined \$3.6 million in local output, 67 jobs, and \$1.4 million in local income (a large portion of which went to Alabama). They found that technical divers made more trips to the Oriskany than recreational divers. The number of trips almost doubled if there was a destroyer to dive added to the trip. The consumer surplus was \$559, and with the destroyer \$1,082. Total annual consumer surplus above economic impact was around \$2 million, and increased to around \$4 million with a destroyer.

The Vandenberg is only 7 miles offshore (compared to over 20 miles offshore at the Oriskany). They did a survey of the diver intentions prior to sinking of the Vandenberg. They will be able to compare revealed versus expected preferences. If the Vandenberg was to be sunk, divers expected to double the number of trips to Key West. The Vandenberg estimates of economic impact were much higher than the Oriskany. They also were estimating the Vandenberg's impact on natural reefs by removing diving pressure. They plan to look at where would be a good location to place a new reef based on economics.

Bob Martore asked about any estimates of fishing on the sites. Bill Huth noted that the Oriskany is more diving than fishing. He noted that they probably should have surveyed fishing effort. Bob M. wondered if you would get larger impacts economically from diving than fishing. Bill Huth thought that would probably be the case, or they may have an equal impact, but he did not have data to support that assumption.

Erik asked what a quick survey or model would be to look at the economic impact of an artificial reef. Bill Huth noted that you can get data from internet sites that would be fairly accurate. You can get survey data back in a few weeks by doing that approach. The statistics were pretty even that way.

10:00 BREAK

10:30 Abundance and Distribution of Goliath Grouper (*Epinephelus itajara*) – Angela Collins

Angela noted that goliath grouper are highly associated with reefs. She added that the species was overfished in the 1980s. There has been a moratorium on fishing since 1990 in Florida. Goliath grouper are critically endangered internationally. The population seems to be recovering

in the U.S. Population size estimates are based upon fishery-independent surveys because there is no fishery. The species is linked to inshore and offshore habitats. Juveniles like structures for hiding inshore. The research group is looking at relative abundance and size distribution at specific sites off the West coast of Florida. They are comparing abundance and size distribution with habitat features, depth, and season. They are also going to be looking at site fidelity.

Angela has 15+ spear fishermen certified to collect data as volunteers. The fishermen have a vested interest coupled with experience, and they know where the fish are and are interested in helping to revive the species. They do a visual survey to assess density and size distribution after they survey a range of habitats and map the features. They do a thorough survey of the entire site both inside and outside the structure. The goliath grouper are relatively unwary of divers. Sometimes even if you cannot see them, you can hear them.

They are tagging fish with external tags using a spear gun. They are gathering movement data. The project started in 2007, and is for two years. They are working off of Tampa Bay in the Gulf of Mexico. They have 78 sites (38 are artificial reefs, 40 are natural habitat). Depth ranges from 7 to 48 meters.

There is much higher presence over artificial reef habitat (90%) than natural habitat (35%). Goliath grouper steal fish from fishermen's hooks. It seems that there is a similar chance of seeing a goliath grouper in a variety of depths over artificial habitat. You see more goliath grouper as you go offshore to deeper waters where the larger ships are sunk. As the volume of the site increases, the number of goliath grouper increases. They do not mind sharing habitat with each other and are not territorial. Some fish are moving offshore earlier than the researchers had thought. There are challenges to measuring goliath grouper.

Angela noted some of the analyses they have run. Large fish are found in nearshore and offshore waters. Really small fish are in estuaries, but they may move offshore earlier than previously believed. They have tagged 165 fish. They have re-seen or recaptured 27 fish, with 7 fish having multiple re-sights. The re-sightings have been at large 1-204 days. She showed some example fish movements.

In summary, Angela noted that the highest densities were over artificial reefs, possibly due to relief, cover, or foraging benefit. There is a positive relationship between abundance and depth. No seasonal patterns stand out. They are finding more small fish farther offshore than previously thought. They have funding to do some long-term acoustic telemetry work. They plan to continue the visual surveys. They hope to increase collaboration with stakeholder groups statewide (including artificial reef monitoring programs).

Kevin Anson asked if there was a goal of the number of tags deployed. Angela noted that they had a certain number of tags and were obtaining more. Kevin also asked if Angela's data would be included in the stock assessment for goliath grouper. She indicated that she had shared her data with the scientists working on that assessment.

Marty asked if the sites seemed to have some carrying capacity. Angela thought that was a good question. She does not have a good answer yet, but hopes to have more information on that over time. She noted that there might be some density-dependence over time. They have only been

looking for two years. She noted that sites tend to have the same number of fish whenever they go. She thought that could also be due to the population right now. She noted that the age of the reef might have an impact also.

11:00 Commercial & Recreational Conflicts on Artificial Reef Sites – *Jeff Tinsman*

Jeff noted that he had invited John Organ (USFWS), who is the federal administrator in charge of Wallop-Breaux and Pittman-Robertson fund distribution. Jeff noted that there has been a recreational and commercial conflict over artificial reefs as long as he has been involved with the process. There is commercial potting on the artificial reefs; the high density potting makes it impossible to drift fish with hook and line gear. That conflict has increased over recent years. In New England through Virginia, it is impacting the use of Wallop-Breaux grant funds for artificial reefing. In Jeff's case, he has a dedicated Wallop-Breaux project, which he has to match with non-federal funds. Other states use the funds in different ways.

In spring 2008, Reef Rescue formed in New Jersey because they were not having success in getting the state to do anything about the recreational/commercial conflict. Reef Rescue sent a letter to John Organ. They asked if the objectives of the New Jersey Reef Program were consistent with Wallop-Breaux. They wondered what the rules were concerning Wallop-Breaux funds when an unintended use like potting precludes an intended use like angling. They wondered if anglers have recourse through USFWS. They also had some other questions. Dr. Organ replied that the New Jersey Reef Program was consistent with Wallop-Breaux. The commercial use of the reefs cannot interfere with the purpose for which the land is managed. New Jersey may not allow activities that interfere with grant objectives. The USFWS has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that grant objectives are met. A range of corrective measures are available to USFWS to do so (the results of which may not please the other reef users; in other words, USFWS could terminate use of Wallop-Breaux for reef development, or compel the state to pay back the funds already allocated). Partitioning of the sites is not a viable solution to the problem.

Following that response, Jeff noted that this summer there were some administrative changes in Delaware, so they had a conference call with USFWS. USFWS noted that at this time, development of ocean sites with Corps permits and approved by USFWS in the state's most recent 5-year Wallop-Breaux renewal may continue to be developed. New sites will have to demonstrate they will be able to control commercial fishing on the site before funding is allowed. Jeff wanted to make everyone aware of this change. He added that going through the Councils to establish special management zones (SMZ) on the sites would be an appropriate control of those sites. If SMZ status is not obtained, USFWS may terminate funding for development of all existing sites, and require repayment of previously allocated funds.

Jeff noted that this is a problem in state waters as well. There is a conflict in Delaware Bay. An enterprising commercial fisherman has developed a live market for hog chokers, which are caught in pots. That would have to be addressed differently through state legislation.

They basically have been put on notice that the Mid-Atlantic states will have to address this issue. He noted that everyone in the Mid-Atlantic needs to convince administrators that sit on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to support the establishment of SMZs.

Bob Martore noted that they have SMZs in South Carolina. He noted that they have also limited gear types for hand-held angling. They had a problem this summer with boats from Florida that were using hand-held spears and diving and decimating reef populations. They asked if they could legally distinguish commercial from recreational fishing if they are using the allowable gear types. They could not. They then asked if the recreational bag limits on the reefs were allowed for all fishing on the sites. That was allowable. Jeff noted that tautog fishermen were already limited to the recreational limits. He did not think that you could make a living spearing seabass on the reefs in Delaware. He thought Bob had a great point though. He thought it might help Marty Gary in Maryland as well.

Keith asked about problems with ghost pots. Jeff noted that there is some DVD footage of ghost pots on the subway cars. He noted some places have piles of pots due to the nature of the reef material. He noted that the pots kill plenty of fish until the panels rot out. Hugh added that the New Jersey clammers are frustrated about this. They are starting to take high fliers off the pots. It keeps getting nastier and nastier.

Bill Horn asked if the USFWS has a problem with hook and line. Jeff did not think so. He noted that all the species have a quota at least. The new fishermen are not as willing to go find the natural bottom as the old folks were. They just go to the reef guide and fish there.

11:30 The Coast Guard's Role in Artificial Reef Permitting – *Madeleine McNamara*

Dr. McNamara is the District 8 U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) coordinator for artificial reefs. She noted that she works in the Gulf of Mexico. She noted that there are two other USCG coordinators on the Atlantic coast for artificial reefs. She wanted to outline the role of the USCG in artificial reefing and make contacts with the Gulf subcommittee representatives.

The USCG is involved in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) permitting process. They address any *safety of navigation* concerns. The private aids to navigation requirements are also reviewed for artificial reefs. USCG has authority through the Ports and Waterways Safety Act and a Memorandum of Agreement with the ACOE. The ACOE is supposed to be the coordinating body for artificial reefing. Madeleine noted that was not always the case. She thought it would be good for people to contact her directly to avoid concerns with a reefing project later on in the permitting process. She noted that if a reef site is determined to be a safety hazard to navigation, the private owner has to mark it and maintain it, which incurs costs.

There are three aspects that USCG is involved with in artificial reef permitting. First, they look at water depth, height of reef, traffic patterns, proximity to pipelines, past incidents in the vicinity of the area, and some other factors. Second, they solicit input from stakeholders of the waterway, including Harbor Safety Committees and industry partners. Third, they would like to work with ACOE and the permittee to mitigate risks early on.

There are regulations for marking an artificial reef if it is designated as a hazard. The markings are applied on a case-by-case basis. Madeleine noted that safety to navigation contact in the Gulf is Joe Vawters (504-671-2119; joe.w.vawters@uscg.mil).

Keith Mille asked about turnover in positions at USCG, and why there is so much change. Madeleine noted that her position is a civilian position, and it had been vacant for a year. She noted that there should be more stability due to it being a civilian position. She noted that it can be a challenge working with the government and military organizations due to the bureaucracy and turnover, so she wanted to be here to introduce herself to the group so everyone would know who to contact.

Bill asked if the USCG did any enforcement of non-compliance. Madeleine noted that it was up to ACOE to deal with permit non-compliance issues. She noted that they would not generally change something from a lighted to non-lighted buoy unless something changes in the environment. She thought that the reef would be charted and marked appropriately for the site. The USCG tries to be mindful of considerations of cost for maintaining aids to navigation, and takes a holistic approach to its recommendations.

12:00 LUNCH

1:30 Subway Car Durability Presentation / Discussion – *Jeff Tinsman, Hugh Carberry*

Hugh Carberry noted that New Jersey had received stainless steel subway cars from New York City Transit that were collapsed after eight months soak time. He showed a video of the cars eight months post-deployment. He noted that the cars were still doing their job after the collapse of the structures. Hugh noted that the video showed observations that were in stark contrast to the Redbird cars deployed five years earlier. They thought that the damage might have been caused by impact from collisions at deployment. However, they did a survey where the cars were broadly dispersed, and the cars were still destroyed.

Marty Gary noted that two days post-deployment the Maryland stainless steel subway cars were intact. At the time, Bob Martore had not yet surveyed his new cars in South Carolina to determine their status.

Hugh thought that maybe the subway car reefs were destroyed by a surf clam boat, but they ruled that out. They really did not know what had happened. Then, Bob Martore surveyed his cars and they had collapsed, some beyond recognition. Marty Gary re-surveyed his site and the cars had collapsed at that point.

Subsequently, Black Laser Learning was contracted to do side-scan sonar at the New Jersey subway car reef sites. They wanted to determine how many stainless steel subway cars were damaged. They first surveyed the Redbird car sites. The Redbird cars showed no degradation. The heights of the cars were reduced, and there were some signs of scouring. Next, they surveyed the stainless steel subway cars. Most of those cars were completely collapsed. Most now exist as low relief debris piles. The debris does not seem to have moved.

New Jersey has discontinued acceptance of the subway cars. The New Jersey Reef Plan states that materials must maintain 90% of their structural integrity for at least 30 years. They also had received a great deal of rock from the ACOE, and the environmental groups in the state would have made a big deal about accepting the cars in light of that fact.

Jeff noted that Mike Zacchea (New York City Transit Authority) was on the speaker phone. Mike noted that he understood that the collapsed cars were still providing good low profile reef material. Hugh noted that New Jersey has a pretty conservative reef plan. The environmental watchdogs added the provision about longevity in the reef plan. Hugh noted that they would continue to monitor the subway car reefs. Mike asked if the other states were going to adopt the 30 year rule. No one else was going to adopt such a regulation at this time.

Jeff began his part of the presentation. He noted that they had been putting all of their subway cars on one site. Their first deployment of stainless steel subway cars was mixed with Redbird cars. Once they found out there was a problem, they started using another site for the rest of the deployments. They decided to try a controlled deployment in April at the suggestion of Mike Zacchea. Mike had a theory that the roofs of the cars were collapsing prior to deployment. It seemed that maybe the stacking was too high on the barge.

Jeff added that they also contracted with Black Laser Learning to side-scan sonar their sites three times (May, August, and November 2009). Many of the cars are damaged at the various sites, which Jeff attributes to collisions. The debris does not seem to be moving offsite. All of the damaged cars were adjacent to other cars in high concentrations. Jeff noted that he was not seeing the same total devastation that Hugh was seeing regardless of collisions, at least in six months of exposure. He is not sure what the life span of the cars in Delaware will be, but it is progressing at a different rate in different places. Jeff noted that the stainless steel is not going away, and it is not breaking down due to electrolysis. He thinks that it is okay as long as the material is not moving around the bottom. Delaware intends to continue accepting stainless steel subway cars. They are okay with the cars collapsing as long as they continue to provide low profile reef structure and do not move off the sites. Jeff added that their sites were farther offshore where wave amplitude is lower, which might be making a difference.

Marty Gary noted that they are waiting for the final results of their side-scan sonar survey. They have four sites of subway cars. One is in deeper water, and three inshore sites. Those in the deeper water are all suffering structural integrity issues. On the inshore cars, they are seeing white precipitate like Hugh saw, but the structural integrity seems pretty good. They were worried that the fragments offshore would be moving, but it looks like those fragments are staying in the box. Once they get the sonar results, they will decide whether or not to take more cars. They will likely continue the program if the fragments are not moving. However, they have private funding, and people have been hearing about the collapse of the structures. Marty is not sure if they will continue to get funding as a result, even though people are being understanding about the situation. Mike Zacchea asked how many cars their agreement was for. Marty thought it might have been an open-ended agreement. Mike thought they had delivered four loads of the cars. He wanted to talk to Marty more once the studies were completed. Mike asked if people were still going to the sites. Marty, Hugh, and Jeff noted that they were.

Mike Meier contributed that the Virginia program started with the Redbirds. They deployed stainless steel subway cars in Chincoteague (eight miles offshore) in December 2008. Black Laser Learning also did side-scan sonar of their sites. They had deployed 44 cars. Sixteen of the stainless steel cars were still intact. One out of their 29 redbird cars was damaged, which had hit another car when it went down. The collapsed cars are providing low profile material that does not seem to be moving around. Virginia has not yet decided if they will, or will not continue with the program. They are having a similar situation as the other states. They hope to decide by next week whether they will take more cars. He noted that people are still fishing these reefs.

Bob Martore noted that South Carolina received one load of 44 stainless steel subway cars in July 2008. His video footage was from 9 months post-deployment. They previously had 200 Redbird cars, and had no problems. They had located 15 of the stainless steel cars, and they had at least partially collapsed. In some cases almost the entire subway car was gone. There is a wide variety of damage. Bob noted fairly decent growth on a lot of the material. However, some of the more lightweight "skin" material is shredding into pieces, and that is the biggest problem. A lot of that material is silting over quickly, and thus not migrating away. They noticed that the end caps would be the most likely part to remain in place. Mike Zacchea was looking for New York City Transit identification numbers so he could tell which series the cars came from. Bob thought that in most cases the section containing the car number was not there anymore. He noted the flapping skins of steel on the video footage. Once the skin is gone, the structure collapses much more quickly. He noted that the habitat does not look pretty, but the fish are still there.

Madeleine asked if there was an effort to incorporate this type of issue into permits. She noted that many of the collapsed cars were in deeper water, but there might be more concerns if they were closer to shore. Bob recalled that issue being raised when New York was thinking about putting subway cars more inshore. Madeleine noted that EPA might want to provide input. Bob noted that all parties involved in this process were aware of the issue. Madeleine thought that this should be a part of the public notice process. She noted that EPA and ACOE were not represented at this subcommittee meeting. Jeff clarified that there is not a public notice or hearing process for deployment of subway cars because they are placed on sites that already have permits. Madeleine wondered if the ACOE was aware of the issue. She wanted this to be food for thought.

Bob wanted to show some footage of his redbird cars. Brooke asked if anyone had looked at the fish community on the intact versus collapsed sites. Bob thought that the species would be the same after the same amount of time elapsed. He added that the Redbird cars hold up very well. Bob noted that he would not be willing to pay the same transportation costs as they had paid previously to get more cars. However, they would be interested in more cars if that cost was renegotiated.

Erik noted that he went on a side-scan sonar trip and did not see scattering of the material. Mike Zacchea thought that he was hearing that movement offsite was little or non-existent, and that was good news.

Marty asked how many cars were left in the generation that they have right now. Mike Zacchea noted that there might be 500 or less. However, they may keep some trains in service, and keep some as spares.

3:00 BREAK

3:30 Update on the ex-Arthur W. Radford Project in the Mid-Atlantic – Jeff Tinsman

Jeff noted that this project was a three state effort between Delaware, New Jersey, and Maryland, in cooperation with Navy. He noted that this would not be a multi-year project like some of the other projects that we have heard about in the past. The Navy has decided that they are going to proceed to transfer the title of the vessel to Delaware as the reef site permit holder. The timeline on this project goes back a while. The ship was retired in 2002, and was identified as a reefing candidate (we do not know what determines that a ship will be a reefing candidate).

Jeff noted that he and Bill Figley (former NJ Reef Program Coordinator) decided that it would be good to do a joint ship reefing project. They proposed candidate sites to the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council. They had three sites in mind as potential areas. It turns out that there are a lot of drifting oil tankers on the continental shelf. They would not approve any sites in the deepest depths. They approved two sites: 120-130 and 180-190 feet depth. They were able to visit the ship in 2006 to determine what it would take to reef the ship.

In January 2008, the Navy announced a request for proposals. On April 25, 2008, the three states submitted their joint three-part final application to Navy. They raised the issue with Beth Freese (Navy) that the bottom paint would need to be removed, or bottom scamping would have to be done, which would significantly increase the cost of the project. They found that the hull was more than 75% covered with marine growth, which demonstrates that the bottom paint is not toxic according to the BMPs. The vessel is already in freshwater in Philadelphia, so scamping is not an issue. Early in 2008, they did not anticipate that their costs would have any significant increases. The Navy asked some additional questions in July 2008, which were answered in October 2008. The American Marine Group was the low bidder for reefing the ship. They found out that the engines had been removed, so there would be an unexpected cost to the states. In July 2009, Navy finished deliberations and announced their intention to transfer the Radford for reefing. Two weeks later, a joint press release was issued.

Jeff presented a list of what was required for the Navy proposal. He added that there was no question about what geographic areas would provide the greatest economic benefit to the country for reefs. He noted that if relative economic value been a consideration, they would lose every time because the ships would go to Florida, California, and Texas.

Jeff noted that you have to have a permitted site before you complete a Navy ship application at this point in time. Many of the questions had already been dealt with as part of the ACOE permitting process. They had proposed a 25% cost-share by Navy, with each state taking another 25% of the \$750,000 cost of reefing. They are hoping for a quick transfer of title.

Hugh added that they hope to sink the ship in late spring 2010.

Dale asked about PCBs on the ship. Jeff noted that they have to compile a PCB sampling plan that is approved by the EPA. Dale asked if there was a hazard study done in order to determine the cost of the work that was done by Navy. Jeff thought Tim Mullane might be able to answer that question. Tim thought it had been figured into the budget. The ship was commissioned right before PCBs were outlawed for ships. Tim added that the Navy had done the PCB survey, and American Marine took some paint samples. American Marine always removes all wire and cable regardless because it is cheaper than doing all the sampling. They will do an inventory, and then write a statement of what will come out of the ship and what will stay. Often it is easier just to take it out.

EPA will do a walk-through inspection to verify American Marine has done what they agreed to do. There is an outside firm that will do the PCB work, and a brief asbestos survey. They have confidence that the vessel is asbestos-free. It is a big ship, but it is not a very big ship as far as space goes. It has a lot of wire and cable. Most of the hull is water compensating fuel tanks. They do not have exfoliating paint issues on the ship. American Marine thinks they will only need 110 days to prepare the ship, if that. Tim thinks it will make a great reef.

Bob asked if the states are covering their share. Jeff is using Wallop-Breaux money matched with subway car funds. Hugh noted that a private foundation donated funds for the project. Marty noted that this has been a challenge because of the economy. They have not secured their full compliment of the cost, but they are working on it. They have some private funds.

Kevin asked if they have been rolling the Wallop-Breaux funds forward to accumulate enough to cover the project in Delaware. Jeff noted that Delaware is using portions of two years of money, but he has a permanent project that is consistently funded that other states might not have.

Bill Horn asked what the next step was. Jeff noted that the lawyers were working on a transfer agreement that everyone can sign. The Navy will draft the first part of the agreement, and it will be revised from there. He hopes that happens in a reasonable time frame.

4:00 Maryland Artificial Reef Program – Erik Zlokovitz, Marty Gary

Marty noted that they would be giving a short update tomorrow on their program. However, he would go through a few things today. In 1996, they had a budget cut and the artificial reef program was dissolved. In the early 2000s, stakeholders got interested in artificial reefs again as the Wilson Bridge project took shape. In 2006, more than 30 stakeholder groups got together and raised over \$1 million to create the Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative. They make habitat restoration their first priority before sportfishing (as fish will follow the creation of habitat). Now people are flocking to the initiative, and they have many more partners with a lot more funding. Their latest donation will help with monitoring. They will plug it into a number of schools. They have made a lot of progress in a few years. With their recreational license fee increase, they have been able to hire Erik to run the program.

The DNR in Maryland is going to announce a major strategy for oyster management in Chesapeake Bay. Instead of working with commercial harvesters, the focus will be on sanctuaries for oysters. They will do a lot of collaborative projects. They will use artificial reefs

in the absence of natural shell. Artificial reefs will play a critical role in oyster restoration in the future. The ACOE has never partnered with them on this before, and they are contributing funds for the project now.

Marty noted that they would show three items of video footage. The first was some Redbird reefs in Delaware. He noted that this was an example of what can happen when you have good structure. Erik noted that there is tremendous growth on the reefs. Jeff added that the Redbird reefs had all been down six to eight years.

Erik noted that New Jersey and Delaware are having problems with entanglement, and that was demonstrated in the video with footage of ghost pots.

Marty noted that there was some footage of a low profile (three to four feet high) wooden wreck. He noted the similarity to the collapsed stainless steel subway car situation.

Erik noted that they had footage of oyster reefs in Chesapeake Bay as well, but did not bring that to this meeting.

Marty noted that he came from a family of salesmen. He noted that people are not telling him no, they are just avoiding him. He is confident that they will be able to obtain the money for the Radford. They just need some more time.

RECESS

Wednesday, October 28, 2009

8:30 Call to Order – Dale Shively

Dale asked for approval of the notes from last year's meeting. The notes were approved unanimously.

8:35 State Artificial Reef Program Updates – All

Virginia

Mike Meier noted that this past year was tough in Virginia. They do a lot of work from the recreational sportfishing license grant program. Last November, the state took \$200,000 back from that pot. They have been assured that they will continue to have long-term funding for artificial reefing activities. Mike has had problems with material. They use a great deal of concrete demolition material and pipe. The companies are not producing as much of that material now though, so their usual sources are drying up. He does not think that situation is getting any better. They will have to look for materials of opportunity as they become available. They have started some monitoring. They just got an ROV, even though times are tight. They hope to do monitoring this winter and observational monitoring into next year. The only monitoring they have done up to this point has been with side-scan sonar.

Florida

Bill Horn noted that the largest project Florida had this year was sinking the Vandenberg. He wanted to show some photos from that project. That project is still ongoing. They still have to pay \$160,000. They should be able to pay it though. They are getting additional information from Reefmakers on those invoice claims. Bill noted that he had not put together a new presentation yet. The diving activity has increased very well. They are working on identifying diver activity. They are also doing biological monitoring. It will cost about \$8.5 million total.

Last year the City of Key West won the auction bid for the ship, and they paid for it using the money that was in the bank already. In May 2009, EPA did very detailed inspections of the ship, which was very stressful. The Vandenberg was reefed on May 27, 2009. Florida staff dove on the ship the next day. A new mandate from EPA is going to require an outside independent inspector to confirm that the issues are taken care of. Joe Kalista did that review for them, which was a big help.

They had a lot of law enforcement and helicopters for the sinking. The ship had four anchors that were set by 3pm. There is still more paperwork to do. There are still hazardous waste manifests that need to clear. They hope to get everything settled, and have a finalized report to MARAD in the next month. It was quite a media event.

Keith noted that he had provided an update that was in the folder. They have started monitoring the Oriskany. The update Keith provided is for 2009 activities. They plan to go out in the next few days to do more monitoring. They have collected fish that exceeded advisories for PCBs. They hope to justify the trend, and see a slight decrease in the levels. They are still in the data collection phase, and EPA is asking for additional information. They may have to do more detailed sampling, which would be very expensive to do. They are monitoring the situation very closely. They have tagged undersized fish, and are seeing site fidelity. They have a 7% recapture rate, which is consistent with what they have seen elsewhere.

They are working with counties to develop BMPs to guide appropriate siting and material use for artificial reefs. The project is part of the National Coral Reef Initiative. They hope to have a draft out for public comment in January 2010.

Keith noted that they would be hosting the Florida Artificial Reef Summit in 2010. The summit is an opportunity for them to communicate with artificial reef stakeholders. He asked that people look at the agenda for the summit. Jeff Tinsman will present information on the Radford project. Let them know if you also want to present some information.

Florida has been spending a lot of their funding on monitoring projects. They are doing a number of projects that are listed in the handout. They are looking for some unpublished materials with side-scan sonar. They are hoping to establish a relationship with the Florida Geological Survey to do some of the side-scan work in the future. He noted that the northern folks were lucky to have Black Laser Learning to do side-scan work for them. They are doing some socio-economic studies in cooperation with the universities as well.

Florida made 101 artificial reef deployments this past year, including five vessels and one barge. One tugboat project was initiated by a dive group. They had concerns about the depth where the site would be located, but thought it would be adequate. It turned out that it was too shallow. They have been working with USCG on the navigational clearance. Madeleine noted that project was an example of what not to do for reefing as far as the county was concerned. The county was very difficult to work with. The USCG has only been working with them on safety to navigation. They have not been able to resolve the issue to date. The ACOE is trying to work with the county on the issue.

Keith noted that they should have a lighted buoy marking the site. They are using a donated buoy. The staff has emphasized the importance of including buffers, but those were not included in this project. Many counties do not have a reliable annual budget for maintenance of a buoy. The preferred outcome would be a situation that would not require a buoy at all. That is how they direct all of their counties.

Madeleine noted that the USCG was brought in prior to deployment, and an analysis was made based on certain conditions. The county already knew what would be required of them prior to deployment, and that was not likely to change. Also, the measurements taken prior to deployment need to be accurate. The county is not in compliance with their permit, so they will need to have a lighted buoy. Keith added that this project was managed by volunteers, which was a problem. The county artificial reef coordinator was pretty new, and did not have the relationships needed to oversee the project and be the responsible authority to evaluate the project to avoid problems.

Bill Horn noted that FWC did not have direct oversight over the project. Keith added that they have very active local artificial reef programs in Florida that can bring in private donors. FWC is most influential when their money is involved. In this case, private dollars were used, and FWC was only able to make recommendations. Madeleine noted that if a project will likely need to be marked, sometimes there will be flexibility in location to move the project. Keith noted that the county thought they had the funds to maintain the aid, which they thought would be an unlighted buoy.

South Carolina

Bob Martore noted that he had provided a summary sheet in the folder. They had a pretty good year after regaining their budget money. He has been trying to spend his money as quickly as possible so it does not get taken away. They have had plenty of materials available, especially from the Army National Guard in the form of personnel carriers. The National Guard has a new environmental program, and they are using the reef-ex program to highlight their environmental friendliness. A film crew taped a segment, but they were not prepared to do underwater filming, so Bob did that. The cooperative agreement with the National Guard is working out well for them. They also published a second version of their reef guide, including maps of the sites. They have done really well this year, and they hope that will continue into the future.

Dale asked if they distribute their artificial reef guide for a cost. Bob noted that the fishing license paid for it, so no.

Louisiana

Doug Peter noted that Louisiana has 9 planning areas for their reef sites, but they have some sites outside of those areas since materials moved due to hurricanes. They have revised their reef plan that went out for public comment. They are evaluating the public comment, and plan to bring something to their artificial reef council. They have had a big push to develop some inshore reefs at the encouragement of the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA). They deployed 600 reef balls in Lake Pontchartrain to add to a collection there. They plan to deploy some limestone as well at other sites. They are also slated to receive 78 bridge spans from two bridges. However, one of the bridges may be made into a fishing bridge. If that happens, they might put some material down for fishing off the bridge.

Dale asked if they had purchased the 600 reef balls. Doug noted that the Lake Pontchartrain foundation paid for most of that project. Dale asked who made the balls. Doug noted that the foundation was originally going to cover the whole project, but the state ended up providing some supplementary funds.

Maryland

Erik noted that they have programs in the Chesapeake Bay and in the Atlantic Ocean. In Chesapeake Bay, they are managing their Wilson Bridge project. Portions of the bridge are at Point No Point, Cedar Point, Goose's Reef (off Chesapeake Beach), and one other site. They are doing diving, hook and line surveys with help from the charter fleet, and side-scan sonar work. They are having a conflict between hook and line commercial fishermen and charter boats. The commercial fishermen have perfected catching striped bass by hook and line, which is creating problems. They are talking about creating special management zones (SMZs) in state waters with their reef committee. After this fall, they will be working with the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory to develop a formal monitoring plan that is statistically rigorous. They are looking at how to collect socio-economic data as well.

Erik noted that oysters are becoming a hot topic in Maryland again. The artificial reef program is developing alternative substrates. Hooks Point has some reef ball deployments. A tributary of the Severn River also has some deployments of artificial substrates that were installed in cooperation with the ACOE. That project is significant to creating a partnership with ACOE for future projects. Marty added that they are limited with availability of oyster shell, so this alternative substrate development is important.

Erik noted that he was working with Chesapeake Bay Middle School to develop shallow water reefs near public access points. They are deploying reef balls under and around a pier to bring fish into the area while minimizing snagging of lines on the material. The Middle School is developing a presentation on the project for a joint state evaluation group. Chesapeake Bay Foundation will help them deploy oyster spat on some of the reef balls.

In the Atlantic Ocean, they are monitoring the subway car reefs with the stainless steel cars. They may get back into the loop on the subway cars, depending on the result of their survey. The Ocean City Reef Foundation continues to do some small deployments. However, their big project in the Atlantic will be the deployment of the Radford. They think they are generating funds through venues they have used previously.

Erik noted that they are developing a reef guide for distribution to the public. Jeff asked how their reef guide is meshing with the Ocean City Reef Foundation's private nature. Erik noted that situation is tricky because the foundation had been managing their program on their own, and they have their own reef guides with detailed locations of all materials that they sell for their primary source of income. They want to continue to be able to do that. Erik has to be careful on the amount of detail he provides for those sites in the Maryland Reef Guide.

Delaware

Jeff noted that he had touched on a lot of Delaware's activities yesterday. They are pursuing state legislation to be able to restrict gear type on their sites in state waters. They hope to have a multi-state approach with the Council on SMZs. They would appreciate the support of all of the states. He thinks it will be beneficial for other states to be able to use SMZs for artificial reefs in the future. They put in an order for two trawlers and another boat. Next year they are working on the Radford, and have a contractor interested in concrete bay sites. They are currently at 1173 subway cars, and are now deploying cars onto the DelJerseyLand site. They will continue to monitor the issues with the subway cars.

Texas

Dale noted that they currently have 58 reef sites, mostly farther offshore. The state line runs out to 9 nautical miles. To date, they have deployed 1806 fabricated materials (like reef balls), 498 natural rocks, 115 oil and gas structures (like platforms), and 23 vessels (like the Texas Clipper). They have some donations that they are waiting on. Resolve Marine is doing four projects for them as mitigation for putting the Texas Clipper on its side. The first project was a tugboat sunk in July.

Texas is looking at the development of a series of nearshore reefs (within state waters that can be reached in a relatively reasonable amount of time). Corpus Christi was interested in reefing a ship, but it would have to be 30 miles offshore. Dale is encouraging them to use other materials, such as quarry rock, concrete, reef balls, and bridges. At Port Mansfield they reefed 2212 tons of concrete culverts. They plan to deploy more culverts at that site. They also plan to reef some bridge pieces and pyramid-shaped concrete structures.

They are working with some university students on monitoring their artificial reefs to provide biological data, create learning opportunities, and increase recreational fishing and diving. The students are taking water quality measurements on the Texas Clipper. They are also looking at the fouling community on the ship. They are using transects and taking measurements at certain points. They have found 29 taxa (including polychaetes, anthropods, and other invertebrates) and have about 35 different fish species currently. There is a thesis project looking at disturbance on the fouling communities.

Brooke Shipley will be looking at improving the Texas biological monitoring program for artificial reefs. She will be working with the universities. They also received a grant for nearshore reef development.

Alabama

Kevin noted that he had provided a written update as well. He noted that they had used a pier on some offshore reef sites. They are also creating some reefs by the new pier using some of the old pier structure and concrete. There is a "no swimming, surfing, and boating zone" near the pier. That is going well. They will be creating a kiosk and other information boards as public outreach on the reefs. They have \$220,000 to purchase a boat to primarily do monitoring. They already have an ROV. They still plan to develop some inshore reef sites. They have revised their public distribution information. They are revising their artificial reef guide to include more recent deployments. They have lines of reefs linking some of their larger reefs together. Many people have been using those, and they have been successful. Some local university professors are doing some research as well. They got some information from charter boat captains on trip reports, and they plan to analyze that data. They have received requests from local dive shops and charter boat captains to develop nearshore reef sites. Escambia County is about to receive approval for a nearshore site to use low relief materials.

New Jersey

Hugh noted that, like Delaware, they are trying to move legislation to prevent potters from using the reef sites. They are trying to deal with that issue from a couple of angles. His update is also in the packet. They are getting 6 million cubic yards of rock. This time they are bringing some rock farther south near Atlantic City, Wildwood, and other beaches. They reefed a scallop boat and another boat. Every year they produce 500 reef balls in the prisons. Those were split between two reefs. They got some demolition concrete from a bridge as well. They have the subway cars also. They are doing some monitoring dives. Black Laser Learning did side-scan sonar on their Atlantic City reefs. They also are doing some aerial surveys. They have an experimental research project on their rock materials to look at benthic colonization. So far, they have very small organisms growing on them. They are still working on the Radford project. They have a new fishing and diving guide for their artificial reefs. They are working on the SMZ regulations as well.

Massachusetts

Mark noted that they are working on some mitigation projects. They also have a group of charter boat captains doing site selection work. They did a side-scan sonar survey and scuba surveys to determine the best location for a permittable reef site. There is no other artificial reef news. In 2011, Massachusetts will be instituting a recreational saltwater fishing license (\$10 per person). There is potential for that money to benefit artificial reefs in the future. They are also going through a zoning exercise as part of the Massachusetts Ocean Plan. There should be some good low resolution mapping as a result of that effort.

Mississippi

Kerwin noted that they were starting to develop inshore reef sites with limestone or crushed concrete. Each reef is about 10 acres. This year, 21,000 cubic yards of material was used on the sites. They try to make sure each county has the same amount of material to keep everyone happy. Offshore they made 24 deployments, some of which were steel-hulled vessels. They have plenty of derelict vessels due to the hurricanes. They have a cost-share program with the derelict vessel program. They had 13 loads (400 tons per load) of concrete culverts deployed

across 10 reef sites. The culverts are all donated. Nobody wants to get rid of their concrete rubble now. They cannot crush the culverts because they have rebar in them. They deployed 360 reefballs, and planned to deploy 560 bayballs. They have a boat donated by Omega Protein, which they plan to deploy. They are doing a biological survey for species richness and diversity between reefballs, concrete culverts, and pyramid structures. They are also monitoring using side-scan sonar.

MMS

Herb noted that the hurricanes had knocked down a number of oil platforms. They decided to reassess their internal policy of waving their policy for cleaning up the sites. They are not comfortable leaving the topsides because they are very contaminated. There is not a lot of structure left once they remove the contaminated parts. They plan to distribute a document to the public, which notes that they will not allow any more topsides or reef baskets to be left on the bottom (no one knows what is going into the baskets). They can only leave structural material from the platforms. He had heard that some people thought that MMS would close the program, and that is not true. They have been careful with the damaged structures as a result. They did not want it to look like a dumping program. They will make a road trip to visit the states.

NOAA

Mike Bailey had nothing to add.

10:30 Next Meeting Time / Location

James noted that ASMFC would be responsible for setting up the next meeting. He asked if anyone had any suggestions for locations. Someone suggested New Orleans, and someone suggested Puerto Rico. James noted that Jeff had suggested moving the meeting to earlier in the year. He would like to have a meeting in January or February. Mike Bailey asked that it not be during the Miami Boat Show. Erik noted that their fieldwork does not slow down until the middle of November. James asked if we moved it to February, would we wait until 2011? Dale noted that we would have to make that the standard change, so we would not keep switching between fall and winter for the meeting.

Jessie wanted everyone to understand that we would not be meeting in 2010 at all then. She noted that we could have a conference call if needed. She just wanted to be clear that the money budgeted for the meeting would be reallocated. Everyone understood that, and agreed that we would not meet again until January/February 2011.

ADJOURN

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

OYSTER TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY
October 30, 2009

Moderator, **Steve VanderKooy** called the conference call to order at 9:05 a.m. The following members and were in attendance:

Members

Brian Lezina, LDWF, Lacombe, LA
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
Robert Goodrich, TPWD, Austin, TX
Mark Berrigan, FDACS, Tallahassee, FL
Steve Geiger, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour, AL
Bradley Randall, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

Staff

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

This was our fourth GoToMeeting web conferencing and conference call combination. We reviewed **Brian Lezina's** section 5.0 – Population Survival.

Lezina stated that he looking for comments essentially on the content. Are the sections covering everything that needs to be covered? Does it need more or less? The mortality section is primarily from the first FMP and he will continue to look for updated references.

- **Nelson** asked about the reference to overharvesting. It is mentioned in several places throughout section 5, to what extent is it an issue now? Since this is currently such a hot topic, this needs to be thoroughly covered.
- Dredging for maintenance or digging for reasons other than harvest; should it be referred mechanical harvest? This was discussed and it was decided that it should be called mechanical harvest.
- Does disease play a part in the spat and juvenile stages? **Robinson** stated that he has a personal communication reporting this is true in juveniles in Texas.
- The genus of the black drum and southern oyster drill needs to be added in sections 5.1.3 and 5.2. After some quick online research and discussion this will need to be researched further. **Geiger** stated they found Atlantic drill in Cedar Key, Florida - need clarification on correct common names.
- **VanderKooy** asked if dermo needs to be its own sub-section.
- **Geiger** offered to help draft the genetic methodology to recognize diseases and then it will be decided where it needs to go, either in this section or public health.
- **Nelson** asked if mud worms are discussed in this section. They are a big issue in aquaculture and natural harvest. They are covered a little bit in section 5.2.1.1. **Nelson** will provide a couple of sentences for **Lezina** to add. **Robinson** stated that Schwartz at A&M did a study on this as well.

- It was suggested that we send sections 5.2.1.1 Competition and Commensalism and 5.2.1.2 Parasitism and Disease to Dr. Robin Overstreet at GCRL for comment and input.
- **Geiger** pointed out that the rebuttal to MSX study implicating Gulf oysters needs to be added. **Lezina** will add it.
- **Nelson** asked if red drum were a significant contributor to the mortality of oysters. **Robinson** stated in a Texas survey they were not.
- **Nelson** asked about the ISSC and public health section. **VanderKooy** updated him on the status of that section which is being drafted by **Harrington** and we will talk broadly about it in this FMP.
- **Nelson** asked if anyone knew about copper in the Gulf Breeze area in Florida. **Berrigan** thought that Bill Fishers group at EPA-FL did some work with oysters related to copper and other metals (sentinel type organisms).
- **Lezina** will beef up the tropical storms effects section 5.2.1.4. Not necessarily disaster criteria, but some evaluation of what has happened recently.
- **Geiger** asked about human medications (i.e. hormone supplements and antibiotics in sewer/river discharge). **Lezina** read something about this recently and will add it.
- **Goodrich** asked about overboard discharge. This is covered in sections 6 and 12. A mention of this should be made in section 5.2.2.1, in the second paragraph.
- **Nelson** asked about the red oyster phenomenon in Texas. **Lezina** will beef up section 5.2.2.1.1 on toxic or harmful algal blooms, red tides, brown tides, etc. We might need to add marine biotoxins to the public health, if it is not there already.
- **Nelson** stated that Mobile Bay has documented Hypoxia and Anoxia and this should be added in section 5.2.2.1.1.1. Scott Rikard at Auburn may have more details on adult mortality. Is there a timeframe for short and long-term exposure? **Robinson** covers some of this in the Biology section.
- **Nelson** asked about siltation/sedimentation in section 5.2.2.1.2. Land use and changes in hydrography – the Mobile causeway and ship channel resulted in higher siltation rates. This is covered briefly in this section.
- In the Dredge and Fill section 5.2.2.1.3 we need to add – “it does resuspend, but a later benefit with edge effect of impacted area for oyster growth in Texas. Pipeline installation exposed shell hash and old shell leading to extensive reefs along these pipelines. (TPWD unpublished data).” Also add something about increased wave erosion from navigation maintenance and coastal development, i.e. bank stabilization issues, etc.
- Section 5.2.2.2.1 (Mechanical Dredging) was re-titled Mechanical Harvesting. **Robinson** reported that in Texas a long term impact of dredging is a depression forming in the middle of reef, the center of the reef is bowl like. Burying, killing spat and juveniles through culling (smash and dump) does it increase predation? The benefits of mechanical harvesting needs to be beefed up in another section and referred to in this section.
- 5.2.2.2.2 Loss of Shell Stock was re-titled Loss of Shell, Cultch and Shellstock. **Lezina** to add maintenance and long-term survival of reefs.
- It was suggested that Alabama may have anecdotal information for marking reefs to avoid shrimp trawling conflicts.
- There was some discussion on the blending or moving of section 5.2.2.3 Coastal Development to the Anthropogenic section 5.2.2.

- Section 5.2.2.3.1. Coastal Community Changes in Demographic section should be given to **Weeks** for her section.
- Section 5.2.2.3.2 **Geiger** and **Lezina** will do some research on desalination in Florida and thermal discharge.
- Section 5.2.2.4 Hydrologic Modification – do we want to add water diversion, freshwater extraction, aquifer removals?
- **VanderKooy** will have James Ballard look at Section 5.2.2.5 Non-native Flora and Fauna for his input and comments.
- At **Goodrich's** request, **VanderKooy** will resend out the Law Enforcement Section to the LEC for update and ask them for their assistance on getting the health department contact information.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting will potentially be held the second week in January, probably in St. Petersburg at the Hilton or the Pier and meeting at the FWRI offices.

The conference call ended at 11:40 a.m.

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**ARENARIUS TECHNICAL TASK FORCE
MINUTES
November 18-19, 2009
Naples, FL**

The Arenarius Technical Task Force (TTF) was called to order on Wednesday, November 18, 2009, at 8:45 a.m. at The LaPlaya Beach & Golf Resort, Naples, FL. The following were in attendance:

Members Attending

Chuck Adams, UF, Gainesville, FL
John Mareska, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Erick Porche, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jessica McCawley, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Brenda Bowling, TPWD, Dickenson, TX
Ron Mezich, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Jack Isaacs, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

Staff

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

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

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed by the TTF members. *McCawley made the motion to accept the agenda as written; it was seconded by Mareska and passed unanimously.*

Minutes

The minutes from the August 12-14, 2009 meeting in New Orleans, LA were approved. *The motion to accept the minutes was made by McCawley; it was seconded by Mareska and passed unanimously.*

Assignment Updates

Appendix/References

The Glossary will be the bulk of the appendix. Please provide additional terms and definitions to **VanderKooy** upon completion of each section. Also review the Glossary and recommend if any existing terms need to come out or the definitions need updating.

The references and citations will be cross checked during the editing process. **Adams** and **McCawley** indicated that they are still hunting a few more references, **VanderKooy** offered the GCRL library. The Ginsberg 1929 and 1930 references were debated again. It was discussed and finally determined that both references are the same paper and while written in 1929, it was not published until 1930. Per the information found by **Mareska**, we will go with the Ginsberg 1930 cited as follows:

Ginsburg, I. 1930 Review of the weakfishes (Cynoscion) of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States, with a description of a new species. Bulletin of the Bureau of Fisheries v. 45 (for 1929): 71-85.

Sections 9.0 Regional Research Needs and Requirements

VanderKooy indicated that this section is a placeholder for now and will be fleshed out as the other sections are completed and data needs identified. This section will be one of the last sections drafted but as you write your section keep track of items that need to be included.

Section 8.0 Social and Cultural Framework of Domestic Fishermen and Their Communities

Isaacs presented various graphs on landings and landings by species for each state to tell the story of sand seatrout. TTF members reviewed and discussed the best way to show changes in the fishery and management changes for unclassified finfish in 5 year increments. **VanderKooy** suggested that a brief history of the groundfish fishery can be blended into other sections, this is an excellent start. The shrimp by-catch paper by Overstreet and Heard reference may help explain some of the changes in groundfish landings. **VanderKooy** will try to locate this paper. **VanderKooy** found several references on the Industrial Groundfish Fishery that may help **Isaacs** and **McCawley**. **Isaacs'** current section will be blended with the Economics section as one Socio-Economic overview. **Isaacs** asked how to best describe groundfish, what species do they include. **Adams** suggested that Ava Lassiter is working on the history of grouper graphically and that might help in trying to show the history of sand seatrout as an overlay over landings. **Isaacs** is looking for city specific landings locations by state; **VanderKooy** referred to a MRFSS report by county and state that has already been provided to the task force, he will forward it to **Isaacs**. **Mareska** reported that sand seatrout are used as live bait for other fisheries and their use should be included (even anecdotally) in the Fisheries and Socio-Economics sections.

VanderKooy stated that **Isaacs** and **Adams** will need to spend some time drafting and blending sections.

Section 7.0 Economic Characteristics of the Commercial and Recreational Fisheries

VanderKooy emailed Gregg Bray and asked if we have any MRIP data where sand seatrout are targeted, how many trips and is there any expenditure data included; by year and state. Bray responded that he may be able to get targeted trips but absolutely no expenditure data is available. **Bowling** will pull the Texas recreational targeting data and get it to **Adams**. **Adams** and **Isaacs** are going to create a market survey form to be given to state port agents who will talk to the shops and ask a half dozen questions on a postcard size survey. **Bowling** provided **Adams** with the Texas monthly data for Tables 7.2 and 7.4. **Bowling** reported that in 1989, 1990 and 1992 the commercial landings in the NMFS data are only sand seatrout, so silver sand seatrout may or may not be included. After much discussion it was decided that there will be a footnote that states "some silver seatrout were not included in these years". In Table 7.5 it was suggested to change the heading of "entangling nets" to "gill and trammel nets, and haul seines". Very little is known or written about the Processing and Marketing of sand seatrout. They do not show up in fish houses, because they are a low end fish. **Porche** offered to call around to see what he can dig up. **Adams** reported that he is looking for citations to back up Table 7.6. **VanderKooy** emailed Robert Goodrich (Texas law enforcement) and asked how the restitution data he provided was generated for Table 7.6. How were they cited, i.e. was it Texas code? Goodrich responded and his reply was forwarded to **Adams**.

There was considerable discussion regarding those individuals in each state that are actually targeting the sand/silver seatrout at certain times of the year and how they are very different from those who target other drum species. **Mareska** reported that there are characteristics of these participants which while not published, could be described anecdotally. The TTF members discussed how state representatives will narrate what the recreational "white trout" fisheries look like in their respective states and how they are different from other 'preferred' species. *This information will be useful for the Sociology of the recreational participants as well as provide some background for the fisheries sections that each rep will draft.*

Section 6.0 Description of Fishing Activities Affecting the Stock(s) in the United States

McCawley reported that there have not been any real changes to the text except what she added from **Mareska** for Alabama for the commercial and recreational fisheries. Most of the figures and tables have been updated since the last meeting however to include 2008 data. They are provided for each state representative to use in the drafting of their fisheries sections.

A general, short introduction is needed in Section 6.0. **VanderKooy** offered to give a stab at it. The real meat will be in section 6.1.1 Commercial History and 6.2.1 Recreational History.

Mareska made a correction to the world and state record off Dauphin Island in 1997 – it was reworded to say:

"The current world record for sand seatrout was caught by Steve Scoggin off Dauphin Island, AL in 1987 and weighed 6 lb and 2 oz, however, a larger specimen was caught by Ryan Conklin of Alabama, that same year, but it was not submitted to the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) as a new world record and it was 6 lb and 11 oz."

It was agreed to add both silver and sand seatrout categories to Table 6.2. Texas added Gerry L. Tompkins who caught a 6 lb. 15 oz. silver seatrout on 2/28/92. The world record for the silver seatrout was a 1 lb. 2 oz. caught by Dave Chermanski of Florida on 8/6/05. The sand seatrout record in the Louisiana of 11 lbs. cannot be correct, so it was requested that **Kinsey** research this record and report back to **McCawley**. **Porche** will verify that Mississippi fork length record is correct and **Bowling** will provide the Texas fork length data.

Table 6.1 for the sand seatrout recreational landings by state, the 1981 Texas data is still missing. **VanderKooy** would look at the total recreational license sales, by state, for the last twenty years and report back later in the meeting.

Section 6.1.2.1 **McCawley** will continue to develop the paragraphs on Florida.

Section 6.1.2.2 **Mareska** will continue to develop the paragraphs on Alabama.

Section 6.1.2.3 **Porche** needs to write a paragraph on the Mississippi.

Section 6.1.2.4 **Kinsey** needs to write a paragraph for Louisiana.

Section 6.1.2.5 **Bowling** will write a paragraph and provide the missing data for Texas.

It was questioned if the recreational table should include the EEZ or state waters only. It was discussed and decided that it should include all waters from 1981 to 2008 (A+B1). After table 6.1 there will be another table added for silver seatrout and this will explain some of the discrepancies we have run into while writing this profile due to the serious questions about the reliability of these identifications. **VanderKooy** submitted an online request to NMFS for the data on silver seatrout during the meeting.

VanderKooy stated that he will work with **McCawley** on the History in Section 6.2 Commercial Fishery Profile. **VanderKooy** requested that the state representatives send their charts to him in Excel so that they can be included in the document without potential formatting issues.

Porche, **Kinsey** and **Bowling** need to write their commercial fishery paragraphs and get that data to **McCawley** (and copy **VanderKooy**) for inclusion in this section by no later than **Friday, January 15, 2010**. **VanderKooy** spent several hours last evening working on saltwater license sales for the sociology section and several questions arose. It was discussed and decided that we should go with NMFS estimates of participation rather than license sales.

Section 6.3 Incidental Catch

Porche reported that he expects to have a first draft of this section by January 1, 2010.

Section 5.0 Fishery Management Jurisdictions, Laws, and Policies Affecting the Stock(s)

Chatagner was unable to attend, so **VanderKooy** reviewed the section. He stated that he was looking for suggestions for the first paragraph in Section 5.0, which he felt needed some wordsmithing. TTF members gave their comments and suggestions. The state by state sections have been submitted by the LEC members and now they need to be reviewed by each state representative for accuracy.

The *Historical Changes to Regulations* sections are important and key sections for interpretation of the landings data in some cases. Those sections were renamed *Historical Changes to Regulations Affecting Sand Seatrout*. Please download your states law enforcement sections from the website or from the CD that **VanderKooy** will send out, review them, update them, and then repost them or forward to **VanderKooy**. Once it is updated and reposted, let **VanderKooy** know when you are ready to have it reviewed by the task force. The deadline for reading and commenting on this is also no later than **Friday, January 15, 2010**.

Section 4.0 Description of Habitat of the Stock(s)

Mezich reported that the first couple of paragraphs of the habitat section were directly from the Sheepshead Profile since they were boilerplate. Section 4.2.4 Submerged Vegetation was a total rewrite and the TTF members need to review and comment back to **Mezich**. In Section 4.5.2 Spawning Habitat please forward any state specific data to **Mezich** for inclusion. **Mezich** stated that he is still looking for any additional or newer references; please send him anything that you may find or come across. **Mezich** reported that he deleted Section 4.9.4.9 Sea Level Rise, there were no objections. **VanderKooy** reiterated that TTF members need to carefully read and send their comments directly to **Mezich** on the entire Habitat section by no later than **Friday, January 15, 2010**. *VanderKooy asked if any states have put out advisories on methylmercury, selenium or any other contaminants in sand/silver seatrout and forward them to him for consideration.*

Section 3.0 Description of Stock

Bowling presented her fourth draft of the following sections: geography, classification, eggs, larvae, juveniles and adults. Section 3.0 Description of Stock was reworded to clarify the difference between the two species (sand and silver seatrout). **Bowling** stated that she will add the Atlantic distribution range (Purtlebaugh 2007) inshore waters in Florida and South Georgia (McCawley 2009) in the sand seatrout under Section 3.1 Geographic Description. In the Adults section 3.2.1.2.4, **Bowling** reported that she is looking for more recent references on the maximum lengths reported. It was suggested that the Alabama and Texas state records can go into this section; **Mareska** will investigate and report back to **Bowling**.

Section 3.2.2 Age and Growth

Mareksa presented his first draft of this section and so far found that there is not a lot of information on the silver seatrout. Please read over this section and provide comments to **Mareska** by no later than **Friday, January 15, 2010**.

Section 3.2.3 Reproduction through Section 3.2.3.5 Larval Transport

Kinsey was unable to attend the task force meeting, so TTF members should read and comment directly to **Kinsey** by no later than Friday, January 15, 2010. **Mareska** suggested that **Kinsey** check the larval transport reference (Felley 1989), that date may be wrong.

Section 3.2.4 Genetics

McCawley's genetics section is just about complete. A few corrections were made to references, adding dates etc.

Section 3.2.5 Migration and Movements, Section 3.2.6 Parasites and Diseases and Section 3.2.7 Prey-Predators Relationships

Porche promised that he will provide his draft on Parasites and Diseases by no later than December 1, 2009. The Prey and Predators Relationships and Migration and Movements sections will take a bit longer to draft and develop.

Section 1.0 Summary and Section 2.0 Introduction

VanderKooy briefly reviewed these sections and stated that they will be primarily boilerplate. The summary will be completed once the rest of the document is complete.

Acknowledgments

VanderKooy asked that TTF members email him the person or persons that they would like included in the acknowledgements.

Next Meeting

VanderKooy stated that he tentatively plans to have another meeting March 22-26, 2010 probably somewhere in Florida and if not then, it would have to be in May or June, after he receives his IJF funding.

GSMFC Travel Policy

The group was provided 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 additional details. Any questions regarding travel should be addressed to the Commission's travel coordinator. Please mail your travel expense reports to 2404 Government, Ocean Springs, MS 39564.

Other Business

Since this was **Teri Freitas'** last meeting as the IJF Staff Assistant, the Arenarius Technical Task Force presented her with a small token of their appreciation and wished her all the best on her

new position with Anchor Environmental. Her attitude and fortitude, despite her having to work with **VanderKooy** for the last three years, was commended and very much appreciated by the entire group.

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

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

**Tuesday and Wednesday, November 10-11, 2009
Raleigh, North Carolina**

APPROVED BY:
Ronald R. Lubman
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
10/27/2010

Chairman Earl Chilton called the meeting to order at 8:30 am. The meeting began with introductions of the Panel members and guests. The following were in attendance:

Members and Proxies

Ralph Allemand, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
James Ballard, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Mike Brainard, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Paul Carangelo, Port of Corpus Christi Authority, Corpus Christi, TX
Earl Chilton, TPWD, Austin, TX
Pam Fuller, USGS, Gainesville, FL
Chris Furqueron, National Park Service, Atlanta, GA
John Galvez, USFWS, Vero Beach, FL
Scott Hardin, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL
Leslie Hartman, TPWD, Palacios, TX
Dewayne Hollin, Texas Sea Grant, College Station, TX
Tom Jackson, NOAA-NMFS, Miami, FL
Chuck Jacoby, University of Florida/Florida Sea Grant, Gainesville, FL
David Knott, SCDNR, Charleston, SC
Trish Murphey, NCDMF, Morehead City, NC
Marilyn Barrett O'Leary, At-Large Member, Pontchatoula, LA
Harriet Perry, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS
Ron Lukens, At-Large Member, High Springs, FL
James A. Morris, NOAA-NCCOS, Beaufort, NC
Chris Page, SCDNR, West Columbia, SC
Bob Pitman, USFWS, Albuquerque, NM
Dennis Riecke, MDWFP, Jackson, MS
Don Schmitz, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL
John Teem, FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, FL
Keith Weaver, GDNR, Social Circle, GA

Staff

Nancy K. Marcellus, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Rob Emens, NCDENR, Raleigh, NC
Tom Lorenz, Mandeville, LA
LCDR Brian Moore, USCG, Washington, DC
Lisa Moss, USFWS, Charles City, VA
Pam Schofield, USGS, Gainesville, FL

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Public Comment

Chairman Earl Chilton provided the opportunity for public comment. No public comments were received.

Review and Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made by Paul Carangelo and seconded by Leslie Hartman to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion passed.

Review and Approval of Minutes

David Knott made a motion to approved the minutes from the March 31 - April 2, 2009 meeting held in Shreveport, Louisiana. Leslie Hartman seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Overview and Demonstration of the Risk Assessment Screening Tool

Michael Hoff, Mississippi River Basin Panel on ANS, gave a presentation entitled "A Model Screening Process to Rapidly Assess Risks of Nonnative Species Establishment and Impacts".

Overview:

- Summarize MRBP's Risk Analysis Process
 - With emphasis on Rapid Risk Screening Process
- Describe tools useful to support decisions to implement that process
- Describe Next Steps for MRBP
- Past recommendation to ANSTF
- Example Risk Screening
- Demonstration of CLIMATE software.

What is a Screening Process?

- A screening process
 - is a risk assessment system designed to RAPIDLY evaluate the invasiveness (establishment and impact) potential of a nonnative species,
 - prior to its importation into a jurisdiction.

Outcomes of Screening Risk Assessments

- Results of risk screening can be used by:
- Governments and industries to determine whether risk, of a nonnative species, impact on native species and ecosystems, is:

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- Uncertain
- Low, or
- High
- Governments can use results to regulate
- Industries can use results to keep “green”
- Both groups can work together
- If species impact risk is Uncertain, then:
 - a more detailed risk assessment is needed
 - ANSTF developed a protocol in 1996
 - Time to revisit this approach
 - Use current scientific, information technology, and risk assessment advancements
- If species establishment and impact risk is clearly Low, then
 - the species is acceptable for importation and/or use in trade
- If species impact risk is clearly High, then
 - a decision is needed about either voluntarily preventing/halting trade (industry), or regulating trade (government).

MRBP Risk Analysis Process

1. Identify Species for Screening
2. Rapid Screening Process
 - a. If risk is clearly low, then no action
 - b. If risk is clearly high, then Step 5
 - c. If risk is uncertainty, then Steps 3-4
3. Prioritize species for Detailed Risk Assessment
4. Agency Conducts Detailed Risk Assessment
5. Develop Agency Actions to Regulate and Manage
6. Implement Agency Priority Actions
7. Evaluate Agency Actions, and Adapt Management Programs.

Mississippi River Basin Panel’s Risk Analysis Process - working version of document available at: [http://www.aur.cerc.cr.usgs.gov/MICRA/MRBP/MRBP Working Version Model Risk Assess. & Management Process 5-12-09.pdf](http://www.aur.cerc.cr.usgs.gov/MICRA/MRBP/MRBP%20Working%20Version%20Model%20Risk%20Assess.%20&%20Management%20Process%205-12-09.pdf). Or Google Mississippi River Basin Panel’s website, and look for the link.

Revised Coast Guard Ballast Water Management Rulemaking

Brian Moore gave a presentation entitled “USCG Ballast Water Discharge Standard - Overview of Notice of Proposed Rulemaking”.

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Why is the USCG proposing a ballast water discharge standard?

- Non-native organisms introduced into U.S. waters with discharged ballast water can invade U.S. aquatic ecosystems.
- Invaders can have adverse effects:
 - Native organisms
 - Human infrastructure
 - Human health.

Authority for this Rulemaking:

Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990

- USCG directed to develop a program of specific regulations and guidelines for the Great Lakes.
- Prevent or reduce the introduction and control the spread of NIS via the discharge of ballast water from those vessels entering U.S. waters of Great Lakes after operating outside the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).
- First voluntary, then mandatory.

National Invasive Species Act 1996

- Extend Great Lakes regime to the nation.
- First voluntary for 2 years.
- Then mandatory if voluntary compliance insufficient.
 - Specific practices directed:
 - BWE Mid-ocean.
 - Retention.
 - Alternative BWE areas.
 - USCG-approved, environmentally sound alternatives.

Why a discharge standard?

- In U.S. waters, over 60% of vessels can not exchange appropriately due to their routes (<200 nm).
- Effectiveness of ballast water exchange varies.
- Provides a clearly defined benchmark for treatment technology development.
- Aids in verifying compliance with BWM requirements.

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Development of a BWDS Presents a Complex Challenge

- Technologies for removing organisms from ballast water are in the early stages of development;
- Approved technologies should be compatible with existing vessels as well as future vessel designs;
- Development of the standard and approval process requires close collaboration among multiple stakeholders (government agencies, scientific community, water treatment experts, shipping industry, etc.).
- The standard must be:
 - Biologically protective,
 - Scientifically sound, and
 - Enforceable.

Applicability

- Vessels that operate in U.S. waters, are bound for ports or places in the U.S., and are equipped with ballast tanks, or are bound for offshore ports or places.
 - Previously exempt vessels operating within 200 nautical miles (nm) of coasts would now be required to meet the BWDS.
- Statutory exemptions
 - Crude oil tankers engaged in coastwise trade.
 - Any vessel of the U.S. Armed Forces as defined in the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1322(a)) that is subject to the Uniformed National Discharge Standards for Vessels of the Armed Forces (33 U.S.C. 1322(n), 16 U.S.C. 4711(c)(2)(J), (L)).
- Administrative policy exemption
 - Vessels that operate exclusively in one Captain of the Port Zone (COTPZ)
 - COTPZs defined in 33 CFR 3.

Procedures to Approve BWMS

- Biological efficacy tests:
 - Land-based tests
 - Largely based on EPA-ETV BWTS verification protocols;
 - Shipboard tests
 - "In accordance" with IMO G8 type approval guidelines.
- Engineering and operational requirements:
 - Electrical,

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- Engineering,
 - Piping,
 - Construction.
- Criteria for certification of independent laboratories:
 - Ind. labs conduct tests.
 - Acceptance of BWMS approved by other countries:
 - Case-by-case basis.

No Pre-emption of States or Clean Water Act

- States retain their authority to “adopt or enforce control measures for aquatic nuisance species”.
- Vessels are still required to comply with EPA’s Vessel General Permit (VGP) program.
 - USCG and EPA are working to harmonize vessel owners’ compliance with both regimes.

Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

- The Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS) addresses the effects on the human and natural environment of five alternatives for the proposed regulatory action to establish a BWDS.
 - It is a supporting document that informs the decision-maker.

Development of Standard

- USCG determined that the BWDS would be expressed as a concentration of organisms per volume that may not be exceeded in discharged ballast water.
- Based on:
 - Information collected during workshops,
 - International discussions,
 - Comments received from the *Federal Register* notices.
- Consensus:
 - BWDS should be expressed as a critical concentration,
 - Size categories helpful in setting criteria.

U.S. Coast Guard Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

- All aspects open for comment
 - Some explicit questions posed.

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- To submit your comments online
 - Go to: <http://www.regulations.gov>.
 - Click on the "submit a comment" box, which will then become highlighted in blue.
 - Insert "USCG-2001-10486" in the Keyword box.
 - Click "Search".
 - Click on the balloon shape in the Actions column.

- Public meetings
 - West Coast, Gulf Coast, Great Lakes, East Coast.
 - Dates and locations TBA later.

A Federal-State Partnership to Improve Screening, Risk Analysis and Interdiction of Non-native Wildlife

Scot Hardin, Exotic Species Coordinator
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Injurious Wildlife List National Screening

- All or nothing
- Unintended consequences
- Who? How?

States would:

- Conduct "place-based" Risk Analyses
- Mitigate Risks (regulations, best management, outreach)
- Inspection and Interdiction
- Data Management (To LEMIS)

Interstate Violations of State Regulations Subject to Lacey Act 16USC 3372 (a) (1) (A)

USFWS would:

- Administration (as in Wallop-Breaux)
- Oversee Risk Analysis Development, Procedure
- Joint Port Inspection
- Data Sharing

Risk Analysis & Screening

- Initial Development, Verification
- Median Screening: 2 months

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- Median Risk Analysis: 4.5 months

Funding

- Excise Tax, Surcharge
- First-time Introduction Fee
- Formula Based on Imports
- Industry Cooperation

Cost

- Development: \$200K (3 years)
- Risk Analysis/Screening: \$366K ↓
- LE Staffing: \$1.5M
- Data Management: \$95K

Tilapia Rapid Response and the Current Range Expansions and Research on Invasive Cichlids in Louisiana

O. Thomas Lorenz

Invasive Cichlid History in Louisiana

- No invasive cichlid species reported before 1997
- Rio Grande cichlids have spread and increased in numbers dramatically since 1997
- Tilapia were introduced into waterways of southern Louisiana in 2008 (or earlier)
- Eradication efforts on tilapia have been largely successful thus far
- Extreme Rio Grande cichlid range extension observed in same location as tilapia introduction.

Rio Grande Cichlid Invasion

- Introduced ca. 20-30 years ago into New Orleans, established
- Dense populations in the canal system are commonly the most abundant fish species
- Occasionally found outside of canal system (LaBranch wetlands)
- First officially recorded in 1997.

Past and Present Research

- Past research:
 - Survey
 - Behavior
 - Salinity trials

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- Current research:
 - Genetics
 - Diet
 - Telemetry
 - More salinity
 - Impact on non-percoid fishes.

Aggression in Cichlids and Centrarchids

- Aggression seems to be common in the field between Rio Grande cichlids and centrarchids
- Preliminary bouts showed that many centrarchids and cichlids fought over territory at all sizes and ages.

Salinity and Temperature

- Salinity has little effect on cichlid growth up to at least 16 ppt
- Temperature variation and winter low temperatures may affect cichlid survival outside of the city
- Possibility of thermal refuge to be investigated by telemetry.

Current Study

- These cichlid may be hybrids of salt-tolerant *H. carpintis* and cold-tolerant *H. cyanoguttatus*.
- Genetic studies could determine if they are hybrids and if there are multiple introductions.
- Diet is demonstrating dramatic variation depending on the site.
- New experiments may demonstrate impact on smaller fish species.

Tilapia Removal Effort - Port Sulphur, Louisiana

Presence/Absence Sampling

- 100+ stations were sampled in surrounding marsh, drainage ditches, rivers, borrow pits, and puddles.
- Sampling methods included electrofishing, seining, cast nets, dip nets, lead nets, gill nets, trawls, and spot rotenone treatments.
- Tilapia were present in approximately 20 samples.
- Other species included: Rio Grande cichlids, sheepshead minnows, Gulf killifish, inland silversides, sailfin mollies, least killifish, rainwater killifish, mosquitofish, and saltmarsh topminnow.

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Rotenone Experiments

- Does rotenone affect tilapia eggs?
- What concentrations of rotenone are needed to successfully eradicate tilapia?
- Does sun exposure and/or organic material affect rotenone treatments?
- How long will rotenone be effective post-application?

Treatment Summary

- June 9, 2009 - 1st rotenone treatment
- June 12, 2009 - 2nd rotenone treatment (canal only)
- June 30, 2009 - 3rd rotenone treatment
- July 13, 2009 - 4th rotenone treatment (canal only)

Treatment Totals

- Total surface area treated = 81 acres
- Total volume treated = 596 acre-feet
- Total gallons of rotenone used = 2,260

Restocking Efforts

- Approximately 40 bowfin, 760 sunfish, 300 spotted gar, 30 catfish, and 115 largemouth bass have been stocked in the Port Sulphur canal.

Post-stocking

- Fishes were collected from various areas in the Atchafalaya Basin and the Bonnet Carre Spillway
- Post-monitoring effort on August 27, 2009
 - Electrofishing in drainage canal
 - Lead net sampling in borrow pits
 - No tilapia or Rio Grande cichlids observed.

Monitoring Efforts

- Presence/absence sampling
- Diet analysis of predatory fishes
- Stocking efficiency of alligator gar
- Changes in community structure.

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Giant Salvinia in Texas: An Update

Earl Chilton, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, gave a PowerPoint presentation on Giant Salvinia in Toledo Bend, Sam Rayburn, and Caddo Lake. He reviewed the Galleon treatment as well as treatment with *Cyrtobagous salviniae*.

Interagency Giant Salvinia Control Team

Bob Pitman

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, AIS Coordinator-Southwest Region

Goals and Objectives

- Increase control efficiency
- Enhance bio-controls
 - Increase weevil numbers
 - Overcome rearing and distribution problems
- Improve public awareness and willingness to prevent spread
- Develop cutting edge control tools
 - Satellite/aerial monitoring

Expected Products

- Develop aerial and satellite maps of Caddo Lake
- Integrate control data into a GIS of the study area for routine and long-term monitoring
- Assess varying levels of feeding damage for control adjustments
 - Nitrogen fertilization
 - Strategic herbicide applications
 - Identify areas w/o weevils.

www.salvinia.org

Current Status of Lionfish

James A. Morris

NOAA National Ocean Service, Beaufort, North Carolina

What's new?

- Invasion chronology
- Reproductive parameters
- Ecological impacts
- Life history and invasiveness
- Control and management.

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Reproductive Strategy and Early Life History

- Lionfish are gonochoristic, iteroparous, asynchronous, indeterminate batch spawners
- Each spawn consist of two buoyant egg balls
- Eggs are encased in gelatinous mucus
- Gelatinous mucus breaks down within 2-3 days
- Eggs hatch and release pelagic larvae
- Mean larval duration is ~26 days.

Reproductive Dynamics

- Spawning seasonality
- Spawning periodicity
- Length at maturity
- Batch fecundity
- Annual fecundity

What are the Potential Impacts of Lionfish?

- Recent surveys suggest that lionfish are capable of consuming more biomass of forage fishes than are available in some coral reef habitats (over 160 lionfish per acre in the Bahamas).
- Impacts to other top level predators is likely through competitive exclusion.
- Niche vacancy is provided by fishing pressure on snapper/grouper complex.
- Lionfish could occupy this vacant niche and hamper stock rebuilding efforts.

Update on Zebra Mussels in Texas

Earl Chilton

Zebra Mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) - A one inch mussel may have up to 600 byssal threads holding it in place.

Chilton discussed zebra mussels in Lake Texoma, West Prong of Sister Grove Creek, Lake Lavon, and a possible range in the Trinity River Basin

Applesnail (*Pomacea insularum*) - In the 1950s, *Pomacea* spp. became popular in the aquarium trade. Originally called *P. canaliculata* or *P. canaliculata*-complex, it currently occurs in seven Texas counties and has been expanding its range for at least 10 years. Studies in 2009 failed to find rat lungworm (*Angiostrongylus cantonensis*) in Texas applesnails, but this parasite does occur in populations in New Orleans.

Giant Rams-Horn Snail (*Marisa cornuarietis*) - Reported present in the San Marcos and Comal rivers, but not in the San Antonio (Karatyev and Burlakova 2007).

Red-Rim Melania (*Melanoides tuberculatus*) - This species can serve as a host for Chinese liver fluke *Chlonorchis sinensis* and Oriental lung fluke *Paragonimus westermani*.

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Update on Water Spinach in Texas

Earl Chilton

- Morning Glory Family
- Native to India and Southeast Asia
- Important Food in the Asian Community

Commercial Culture

- Dates from 300 AD in China
- Diet staple
 - High protein content
 - Used as animal feed
- Medicinal properties
- Widely cultivated in many countries

Risk Assessment Findings

- Water spinach has been cultivated and sold in Texas for approximately 30 years with no evidence that it has been able to establish itself in the wild.
- Texas climate is a poor match when compared to the climate in areas where water spinach is native.
- Temperature data indicate it would be difficult for water spinach to survive year round outside of greenhouses in Texas.
- Water spinach has not exhibited a propensity for rapid spread in either Florida or California.
- Water spinach is controllable with herbicide.

Current Status in Texas

- Evaluated 10 years of vegetation surveys.
- Informal visits to markets and restaurants.
- Directed vegetation surveys in Dallas-Ft. Worth, Austin, San Antonio and Houston.
- Follow-up surveys with other states.

Proposed Regulations

- Water spinach will remain a restricted species in Texas. Due to its relatively low risk, cultivation by permitted growers and unrestricted possession for personal consumption will be allowed.
- Commercial cultivation will take place only in TPWD-permitted facilities.
- Wholesale and retail outlets will be allowed to possess water spinach and sell it for personal consumption if they retain invoices from permitted growers within Texas and from persons selling water spinach legally from outside Texas.

Members Forum

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State updates were given for the states of Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina, Texas and Louisiana. Alabama was not represented.

Overview of Mid-Atlantic Panel Activities

Lisa Moss, Panel Coordinator

Mission Statement: The mission of the MAP is to assist state and federal agencies and other stakeholders in developing and implementing strategic, coordinated, action-oriented approaches to prevention and control of aquatic invasive species in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Who is MAP?

- Individuals from state and federal agencies, private and commercial interests, regional entities, and academic institutions.
- Established in 2005.
- Represents DE, DC, MD, NC, NJ, NY, PA, VA, and WV.

2009 MAP Priorities

- Encourage states to develop an AIS management plan.
- Implement AIS management plans.
- Work with the Environmental Law Institute to examine regional coordination efforts for preventing the spread of AIS.
- Utilize existing national databases to map distributions of AIS in the region.
- Build on current regional efforts in early detection of new or expanded AIS populations and rapid response to invasions.

MAP Small Grants Program

- Encourages broad participation-government agencies, academic institutions, NGOs, watershed, landowner and community groups, and Tribes.
- No matching funds required but equal or 2:1 match recommended and considered favorable.
- Ranking criteria-regional relevance to MAP mission and priorities with emphasis on outcomes and applications.
- Applicants must discuss proposals and gain written support from respective MAP state member.

2009 MAP Funded Projects

- Pilot Project for Data-Driven Nutria Study and Removal from Nags Head Woods Ecological Preserve
- Coordination of Regional Monitoring Network and Implementation of Web-based Reporting System to Determine Status of the Chinese Mitten Crab in the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays and Mid-Atlantic Coast.
- Estimating Risk of Fish Invaders in the Mid-Atlantic Region.
- Aquatic Invasive Species Field Guide for Pennsylvania.
- Outreach Regarding Virginia's Phragmites Invasion.

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FY2009 AIS Activities in Region 4 of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

John Galvez, USFWS - Southeast Region

2009 AIS Program Activities

- Prevention
 - Florida Invaders [Spanish Edition] (USFWS/ENP)
 - Geo-reference AIS Data (Pam Fuller - USGS)
 - Chytrid fungus (Bd) Chemical Treatment Evaluation (Warm Springs FHC)
- Detection and Monitoring
 - AIS surveys (Baton Rouge FRO, Lower MS FRO, Welaka NFH)
- Control and Management
 - Tilapia in New Orleans (LADWF/Baton Rouge FRO)
 - Asian swamp eels - Homestead population (South Florida FRO/Welaka NFH)
 - Snakehead in Arkansas (Arkansas G&F Commission/PVT John NFH)
 - Zebra and Quagga Mussel Bio-control (USGS/USFWS)
 - Giant Salvinia Control Caddo Lake
 - Apple Snail Sterilization for Bio-Control (John Teem, FL DOACS)
 - Indo-Pacific Marine Crab Identification Publication (Daryl Felder, UL-Lafayette)
 - Everglades ANS (Pam Schofield, USGS)
 - Field Guide to the Non-indigenous Marine Fishes of Florida (Pam Schofield)

Status of Asian Tiger Shrimp, Ver. 11. '09 (*Penaeus monodon*)

James Morris, NOAA

Pam Fuller, USGS

Trish Murphy, NCDENR

They're ~~Back~~ Still Here? Here Again?

- 2006
 - Pamlico Sound, NC (5)
 - Mississippi Sound, Dauphin Island, AL (1)
- 2007
 - Pamlico Sound NC (1)
 - St. Augustine, FL (1)
 - Vermilion Bay, LA (1)
 - Fripp Island, SC (1)
- 2008 - 14 *Penaeus monodon* reported
 - NC - 8
 - SC - 4

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- AL - 1
- FL - 1
- 2009 - 31 *Penaeus monodon* reported (One LA specimen found in late August, others reported from mid-September through October)
 - NC - 16
 - SC - 8
 - GA - 0
 - FL - 0
 - AL - 0
 - MS - 3
 - LA - 4

History

- ~2000 accidentally released in SC in July 1988
- collected in trawls from SC to FL for the next 3 months
- disappeared by November 1988, until reappearance in 2006.

Source(s)?

- Established breeding populations along the US coast?
- Possible ballast transport and delivery?
- Anecdotal evidence about escapement from Caribbean aquaculture operations.

Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force Update

James Ballard reported that the ANS Task Force met last week in Silver Spring, Maryland. Ballard distributed copies of a Comparison of the Components of the ANSTF Strategic Plan and the NISC Management Plan. Highest priority from the task force members was noted on the top of the handout.

Ballard also distributed copies of Panel projected funding needs. As a follow up the Task Force will be getting with the individual panels on specific projects needing funding. Ballard asked Panel members to send him a small paragraph with particular funding needs and he would compile a list.

Discussion of GSARP's 2010-2014 Strategic Plan

Copies of the 2010-2014 Strategic Plan was distributed to the Panel. Ballard requested comments to the draft which he would compile to finalize at the next Panel meeting.

Overview of the New GSARP Website

James Ballard gave a demonstration of the new GSARP website.

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Election of Officers

Pam Fuller nominated Ron Lukens for Chairman. The nomination was seconded by David Knott. A motion to close the nominations was made by Dennis Riecke, and seconded by Chris Furqueron. Lukens was unanimously elected Chairman.

Harriet Perry nominated Pam Fuller for Vice-Chairman. The nomination was seconded by David Knott. Pam Fuller nominated James Morris and was seconded by Bob Pitman. After a vote of present members, James Morris was elected as Vice-Chairman.

Other Business

No Other Business was presented.

Public Comment

Chairman Earl Chilton once again provided the opportunity for public comment. No public comments were received.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.