

INTERSTATE FISHERIES COMMISSION- USGS PARTNERSHIP

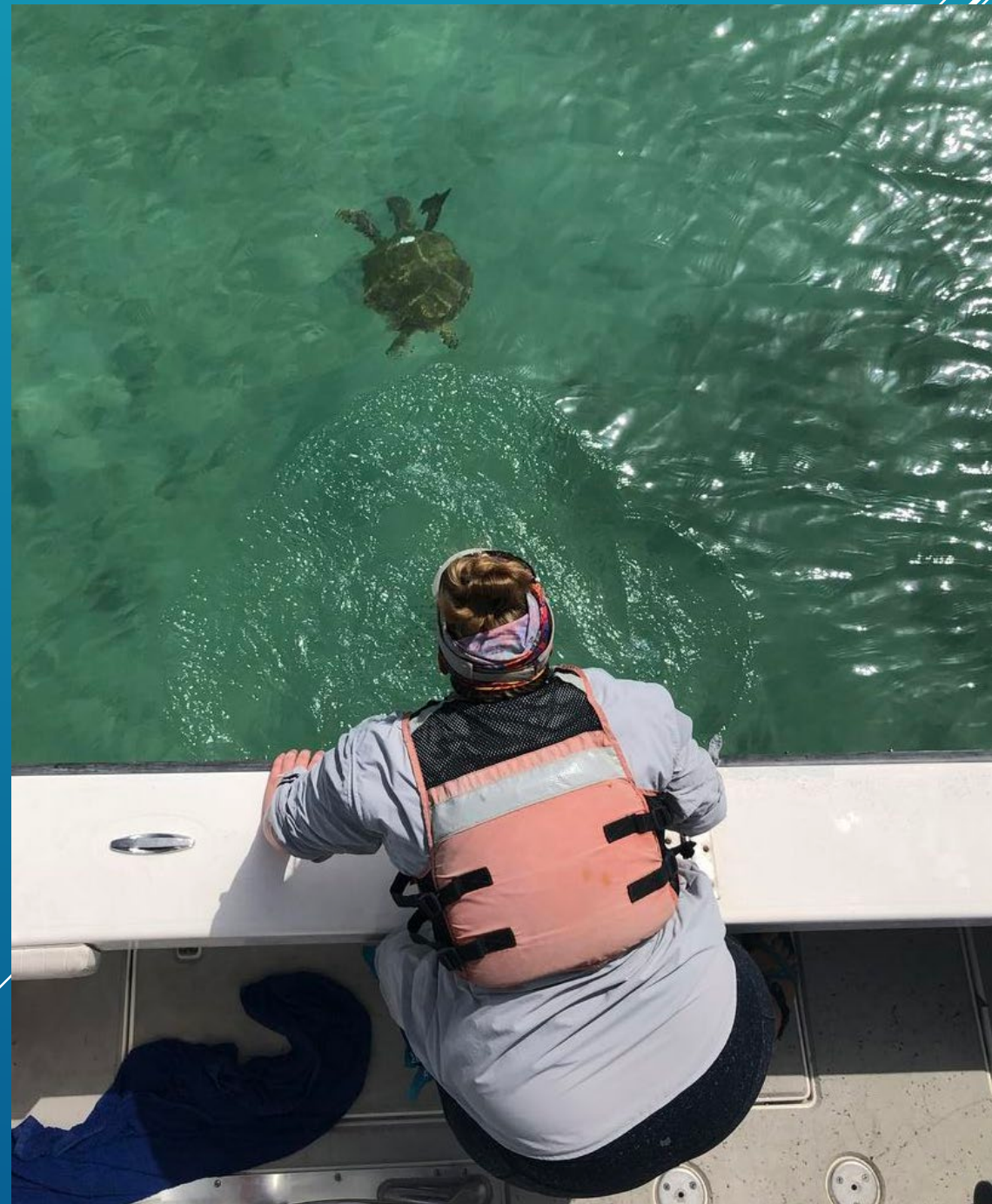
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
76th Annual Meeting
October 27-30, 2025



HISTORY

2022 - The Commission directed staff to begin discussing with the USGS Wetlands and Aquatic Research Center (WARC) on shared research goals.

2023 – Staff met with the WARC staff and landed on tagging and migration. WARC already had a history of tag/recapture and tracking of sea turtles.



COBIA TAGGING

2024 - USGS successfully acquired a RESTORE grant to analyze historic datasets related to Cobia and other pelagic species.

2024 - The IJF Program and USGS staff (Dr. Meg Lemont) began a pilot to tag Cobia with acoustic and SAT tags in the region.

2025 – By spring, 41 Cobia were tagged from Naples to Destin, Florida. Additional efforts were made by partners to tag Cobia in the northern and western Gulf.



PARTNERSHIP

2024 – The USGS regions and the four fisheries commissions presented the history of collaborations at National AFS.

Following the symposium, all parties held a workshop to formalize a national partnership. VanderKooy serves as the rep for the four commissions in the Partnership development process.



PARTNERSHIP OUTREACH

2025 – In January, the Science Team met and began drafting outreach materials.

Currently, we have a Fact Sheet, a set of Talking Points, and a draft article for the AFS Fisheries Magazine submitted for publication.

DRAFT manuscript – Interstate Fisheries Commissions-USGS Partnership

[Title] Strengthening ties between Interstate Fisheries Commissions and the U.S. Geological Survey

Abstract

Fish inhabiting marine coastal and Great Lakes waters of the U.S. eat, migrate, and reproduce without regard to man-made boundaries. In the mid-20th Century, the 32 states along the U.S. coasts and Great Lakes recognized the growing need for coordinated, interjurisdictional fisheries management and formed four interstate or international fisheries commissions through federal legislation. While distinct in their authorities, each commission shares functions to support their regional partners, including coordinating fisheries science and supporting information sharing. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is a federal science bureau with substantial fisheries science capacity and no management or regulatory authority. This empowers the bureau to serve as an impartial broker of scientific information, which is greatly appreciated by decision-making agencies. The USGS does not maintain broad infrastructure for engaging partners across regions. Therefore, collaboration between the USGS and fisheries commissions ensures that USGS fisheries science helps address the most pressing interjurisdictional management priorities. USGS has worked with fisheries commissions for decades to a greater or lesser extent in each of the four regions: Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf, and Great Lakes. In 2020, the USGS began efforts to cohesively strengthen these partnerships across the regions. In 2024, leadership from four USGS fisheries science centers and headquarters met with the four fisheries commissions in-person for the first time during the American Fisheries Society annual meeting. During the gathering, the new Interstate Fisheries Commissions-USGS Partnership developed coordination mechanisms and identified shared science priorities where the USGS capacity best aligns with the science needs of the commissions. Here we

The USGS-Fisheries Commissions Interregional Partnership

The new Interstate Fisheries Commissions USGS Partnership (Partnership) provides a venue to identify both regional and national fisheries science needs, align science priorities, and leverage resources and expertise to address these through coordinated efforts. The USGS is working more deliberately with the four interstate commissions (the Great Lakes, Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf commissions), The Partnership has the capability to



Commercial landings in the U.S. approached \$5.8B in 2022

Interstate Fisheries Commissions-USGS Partnership: Talking Points

- **Fisheries are vital to our Nation's economy, food security, and national heritage.**
 - Domestic seafood production is declining, resulting in an international trade deficit of \$24.2 billion.¹
 - Marine and Great Lakes recreational fisheries generate over \$145 billion in sales with significant value to rural economies¹ with nearly 40 million US residents partaking in recreational fishing in 2022.²
 - The fishing industry supports over 2.3 million jobs in the U.S.¹
 - Healthy fisheries help ensure food security for Americans. It also helps maintain our tribal treaty commitments.

To support productive interjurisdictional fisheries, resource managers need impartial, actionable science at the right scale.

- Data about interjurisdictional fish populations inform stock assessments to allocate catch limits.
- Science about the effects of environmental factors and fish diseases helps resource managers optimize the management of fish populations.
- Understanding fish predator and prey relationships, habitat restoration needs, invasive species, and freshwater allocation regimes can improve long-term stability of fish populations.

The USGS and the Fisheries Commissions have entered a partnership to improve effective and efficient science delivery to fisheries managers.

- As a bureau with no regulatory authority, the USGS conducts impartial science to support federal, state, and Tribal fishery management agencies.
- Interstate Fisheries Commissions enable more efficient utilization of fisheries in their regions by coordinating science, data collection, and management planning across state & national boundaries.
- The USGS and Fisheries Commissions have developed a partnership to align shared science priorities, coordinate efforts across regions, and leverage resources and expertise to ensure the USGS science is matched to the needs of resource managers.

The Partnership has identified four shared priority areas for the near future.

- **Population and Ecosystem Assessments:** tracking key fish species, supporting fisheries stock assessments, and evaluating and predicting ecosystem processes impacting fisheries under changing conditions.
- **Cutting-edge Technologies:** developing and implementing innovative tools, sensors, methods, and regional and national data sharing approaches to support sustainable fisheries management.
- **Habitat Restoration Science:** providing science to support evaluation, restoration, and management of aquatic habitats, including research to inform dam removals or fish passage around barriers.
- **Invasive Species Science:** early detection and rapid response of invasive species³, and development of

Age Technologies: developing and innovative tools, sensors, methods, and national data sharing approaches to sustainable fisheries management.

Species Science: detecting, rapidly to, and developing control mechanisms species such as European green crab; catfish; northern pike; Asian carp; non-empire; and quagga, zebra, and golden

Restoration Science: providing science to evaluation, restoration, and management of ecosystems, including research to inform dam fish passage around barriers.

NEXT STEPS

2026 – The Science Team will begin working on Research Priorities for each region based on the management needs of each commission.

Next September, the Partnership members will meet again at the National AFS meeting in Columbus, Ohio.



QUESTIONS?

