

1998 Operations Plan
for the
Commercial Fisheries Information Network
(ComFIN)

by: ComFIN Committee

MARCH 1998

Number 54

**1998 Operations Plan for the
Commercial Fisheries Information Network (ComFIN)**

January 1, 1998 to December 31, 1998

I. INTRODUCTION

The ComFIN is a cooperative state-federal marine, anadromous and estuarine commercial fisheries data collection program. It is intended to coordinate present and future marine commercial fisheries data collection and data management activities through cooperative planning, innovative uses of statistical theory and design, and consolidation of appropriate data into a useful data base system. This operations plan implements the FIN Framework Plan for 1998. All tasks will be completed dependent upon availability of funds.

II. MISSION AND GOALS

The mission of the ComFIN is to cooperatively collect, manage, and disseminate marine commercial and anadromous fishery data and information for the conservation and management of fishery resources in the Southeast Region¹ and to support the development of a inter-regional program.

The four goals of the ComFIN are:

- @ To plan, manage and evaluate a marine commercial fishery data collection program;
- @ To implement and maintain a marine commercial fishery data collection program;
- @ To establish and maintain a marine commercial fishery data management system; and
- @ To support the development and operation of an inter-regional program.

The goals and objectives of the ComFIN are found in Appendix A.

¹The Southeast Region (the Region) includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Texas and the U.S. Virgin Islands

III. OPERATIONS

A. Data Collection and Management

Ongoing marine commercial fisheries surveys will be conducted by various state and federal agencies. The ComFIN Committee will review and evaluate ongoing activities and provide recommendations for continued operations.

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

The tasks below cover all 1998 objectives.

Task 1: Annual Operations Plan, 1999 (Goal 1, Objective 1)

Objective: Develop 1999 Annual Operations Plan, including identification of available resources, that implements the Framework Plan.

Team Members: ComFIN Committee

Approach: Through meetings and mail, the Committee will develop and complete an Annual Operations Plan for 1999.

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

Product: 1999 Annual Operations Plan

Schedule: The Plan will be drafted by mid/late summer 1998 and submitted for approval by the Committee at the fall 1998 meeting.

Task 2: Development of a Recommendations Document (Goal 1, Objective 1)

Objective: Develop a recommendations document which will guide the program.

Team Members: Ad Hoc Work Group

Approach: Using the information from the CSP facilitated session in 1993, the group will develop a document which outlines the recommendations and related tasks for the future of ComFIN. This document will guide the program and be used to develop annual operations plans. Accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail.

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

Product: Recommendations document

Schedule: The Work Group will begin addressing this issue in early 1998 and will present the document at the fall 1998 meeting.

Task 3: Development of an Implementation Plan (Goal 1, Objective 1)

Objective: Develop an implementation plan for ComFIN

Team Members: ComFIN Committee

Approach: Using the information developed from the Committee and various work groups, the Committee will draft a plan which will be used by the program partners to implement ComFIN. Staff will compile existing information and present a draft document to the Committee in early 1998. Accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail. This plan will be developed in conjunction with the ComFIN implementation plan.

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

Product: Implementation plan

Schedule: The Committee will address this at the spring 1998 meeting.

Task 4: Information Dissemination (Goal 1, Objective 5)

Objective: Distribute program information to cooperators and interested parties.

Team Members: ComFIN Committee and staff

Approach: The Committee will distribute information concerning the structure, mission, goals and objectives, etc., to cooperators and interested parties documented by a request log. Each committee member is responsible for maintaining a list of information distributed and providing that list to the ComFIN staff.

Resources: Copy and mailing expenses and inkind (time) and staff time.

Product: A report which compiles a record of information distributed and presentations given by the Committee and staff.

Schedule: This task is an ongoing activity.

Task 5: Current and Future Data Needs (Goal 2, Objective 1)

Objective: Annually compile a listing of current and future data needs for fisheries management and track the collection of these data.

Team Members: ComFIN Committee

Approach: Collect information through the established data collection planning process which determines the species that will be targeted for size frequency and bioprofile sampling for the upcoming year. Also, utilize the data tracking process to determine whether the size frequency and bioprofile data identified by the ComFIN has been provided. Accomplished by telephone and mail.

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

Product: A report which lists the current and future data needs necessary for fisheries management and recommendations.

Schedule: A preliminary report will be presented at the spring 1998 meeting. This is an ongoing activity.

Task 6: Development of a Generic Trip Ticket Program (Goal 2, Objective 1)

Objective: Develop a generic trip ticket program for the Southeast Region.

Team Members: Future Needs Work Group

Approach: Using the data element matrix which identifies data gaps in the Southeast Region, the licensing document, and the non-reported landings schematics, the Work Group will design a modular trip ticket program that can be used by agencies interested in implementing a trip ticket program in their jurisdiction. The program will generically outline the necessary elements for a successful trip ticket program. Accomplished by meeting, telephone, mail and in conjunction with the ACCSP, where applicable.

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

Product: Outline for a trip ticket program

Schedule: The Work Group began addressing this issue in 1997 and will continue working on it during 1998.

Task 7: Development of the Discards and Protected Species Interactions Modules (Goal 2, Objective 1)

Objective: Develop the discards and protected species interactions modules of the ComFIN.

Team Members: Data Collection Work Group

Approach: Using information developed by the ACCSP and other pertinent information, the Work Group will design a data collection module for the compilation of discards and protected species interactions for all commercial fisheries in the Southeast Region. The program will outline the data elements that need to be collected for compilation of discards and protected species interactions. Accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail and in conjunction with the ACCSP, where applicable.

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

Product: Discard and Protected Species Interactions collection program

Schedule: The Work Group began addressing this issue in 1997 and will continue working on it during 1998.

Task 8: Development of the Market Module (Goal 2, Objective 1)

Objective: Develop the market module for the ComFIN.

Team Members: Data Collection/Social Economic Work Groups
Approach: Using information developed by the ACCSP and other pertinent information, the Work Group will design a data collection module for the compilation of market information for all commercial fisheries in the Southeast Region. The program will outline the data elements that need to be collected for compilation of economic information. Accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail and in conjunction with the ACCSP, where applicable.
Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, inkind support and staff time.
Product: Market data collection module
Schedule: The Work Groups began addressing this issue in 1997 and will continue working on it during 1998.

Task 9: Development of the Social/Economic Module (Goal 2, Objective 1)

Objective: Develop the social/economic module for the ComFIN.
Team Members: Social/Economic Work Group
Approach: Using information developed by the ACCSP and other pertinent information, the Work Group will design a data collection module for the compilation of social/economic information for all commercial fisheries in the Southeast Region. The program will outline the data elements that need to be collected for compilation of social/economic data. This module will be similar to the market module. Accomplished by meeting, telephone and mail and in conjunction with the ACCSP, where applicable.
Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, inkind support and staff time.
Product: Social/Economic data collection module
Schedule: The Work Group will begin addressing this issue during 1998.

Task 10: Development of Data Collection Procedures Document (Goal 2, Objective 1)

Objective: Develop a document which outlines the procedures for the collection of data under the ComFIN.
Team Members: Ad hoc work group
Approach: The work group will develop a document which describes the various techniques and methods for collection of marine commercial data. The group will utilize existing procedures for the Trip Interview Program and other related information.
Resources: Telephone costs, report costs, travel/meeting costs, inkind support and staff time.
Product: Procedures document

Schedule: The work group will meet in 1998 to address this issue and present their results to the Committee at the fall 1998 meeting.

Task 11: Integration into the Stock Assessment Process (Goal 2, Objective 5)

Objective: Develop a plan which outlines the needs for stock assessment for the upcoming year.

Team Members: ComFIN Committee

Approach: The Committee has develop a data collection planning process which identifies the priority species (and associated data needed to be collected) for the state, interstate and federal entities. The plan will provide guidance to the states, NMFS, and FWS for the development of funding mechanisms that are implemented to provide funding support for collecting the data. During the fall meeting, the Committee will conduct an evaluation of the adherence to prior year's plan and final review of prior year's data.

Resources: Mail cost, telephone costs, and inkind (time) and staff time.

Product: Data collection plan

Schedule: The plan is currently being developed and will be discussed by the Committee at the fall 1998 meeting.

C. Administrative Activities

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

- @ Work closely with the ComFIN Committee in all aspects of program coordination, administration, and operation;
- @ Implement plans and program directives approved by the ComFIN Committee;
- @ Provide coordination and logistical support, including communications and organization of meetings for the ComFIN Committee, subcommittees, and work groups;
- @ Develop and/or administer cooperative agreements, grants, and contracts;
- @ Serve as liaison between the ComFIN Committee, other program participants, and other interested organizations;
- @ Assist the ComFIN Committee in preparation or review of annual spending plans;

- @ Prepare annual operations plans under the direction of the ComFIN Committee;
- @ Prepare and/or supervise and coordinate preparation of selected documents, including written records of all meetings;
- @ Distribute approved ComFIN information and data in accordance with accepted policies and procedures as set forth by the ComFIN Committee;
- @ Assist in the identification of regional and geographic needs that can be satisfied through ComFIN activities;
- @ Seek funding for ComFIN activities as the need develops; and
- @ Conduct or participate in other activities as identified.

D. Time Table for ComFIN

	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>
Management and Evaluation					
Operations Plans	X	X	X	X	X
Funding priorities		X	X	X	X
Information dissemination	X	X	X	X	X
Program Review					X
Data Collection					
Data needs	X	X	X	X	
Standard collection protocol	X	X			
Quality control/assurance		X	X		
Data confidentiality	X	X			
Data Management					
Standard coding system			X	X	
Data management system		X	X	X	X
Data maintenance	X	X	X	X	X
Standard management protocols		X	X		
Data confidentiality	X	X			

E. Committee and Work Group Membership

ComFIN Committee

Steven Atran Gulf of Mexico Fishery Mgmt. Council	Ron Lukens Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
Page Campbell Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	Daniel Matos Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources
Lisa Kline Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	Joe Moran South Carolina Dept. of Natural Resources
Wilson Laney U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Theo Brainerd South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Skip Lazauski Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Marine Resources Division	Joe O'Hop Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection

ComFIN Committee (continued)

Dee Lupton
North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries

Tom Schmidt
National Park Service

John Poffenberger
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Joe Shepard
Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries

Julie Califf
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Tom Van Devender
Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

Miguel Rolón
Caribbean Fishery Management Council

Representative
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Data Collection Work Group

Page Campbell
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

John Poffenberger
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Skip Lazauski
Alabama Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources

Julie Califf
Georgia Coastal Resources Division

Representative
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Joe Shepard
Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries

Dee Lupton
North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries

Data Management Work Group

Steven Atran
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Mgmt. Council

Skip Lazauski
Alabama Department of Conservation
and Natural

Mary Anne Camp
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Joe Moran
South Carolina Dept. of Natural Resources

Representative
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Future Needs

Steven Atran
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Mgmt. Council

Mary Anne Camp
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Skip Lazauski
Alabama Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources

Representative
Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife

Dee Lupton
North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries

John Poffenberger
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

APPENDIX A

ComFIN Goals and Objectives

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

Objective 1 To establish and maintain a ComFIN 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 a 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 fishery data collection program for the Region.

Objective 1 To characterize and periodically review the commercial 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 ComFIN requirements.

Objective 5 To coordinate, integrate and augment, as appropriate, data collection efforts to meet ComFIN requirements.

Objective 6 To evaluate and recommend innovative data collection methodologies and technologies.

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

Objective 1 To periodically review and make recommendations regarding the location and administrative responsibility for the ComFIN 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 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 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 an inter-regional 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 inter-regional program planning.

Objective 2 To coordinate ComFIN with other regional and national marine commercial fisheries programs.

Objective 3 To encourage consistency and comparability among regional and national marine commercial fisheries programs over time.