

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The mission of the ComFIN and RecFIN(SE) is to cooperatively collect, manage, and disseminate marine commercial, recreational and anadromous fishery data and information for the conservation and management of fishery resources in the Region and to support the development of an inter-regional program. The four goals of the ComFIN and RecFIN(SE) include:

- plan, manage, and evaluate a State/Federal commercial and recreational fisheries data collection program;
- implement a State/Federal commercial and recreational fisheries data collection program;
- establish and maintain a commercial and recreational fisheries data management system; and
- support for the development of national program.

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

To carry out the ComFIN and RecFIN(SE) mission, an organizational structure has been created to address a variety of issues. The organizational structure of the program consists of the FIN, ComFIN and RecFIN(SE) Committees, three geographic subcommittees (Caribbean, Gulf, and South Atlantic), standing and ad hoc subcommittees, technical work groups, and administrative support.

PROGRAM DESIGN



The two major components of the FIN are the data collection and data management system. The data collection component is divided into commercial and recreational

modules. The components of the data collection system are catch and effort data, collection of biological data, social and economic data, discards and protected species interactions data, and quota monitoring. All the information collected under FIN will be integrated and available through the FIN data management system. This

system will allow access to the data by fisheries managers, fishermen, scientists, the fishing industry and other interested parties, according to confidentiality policies and protocols.

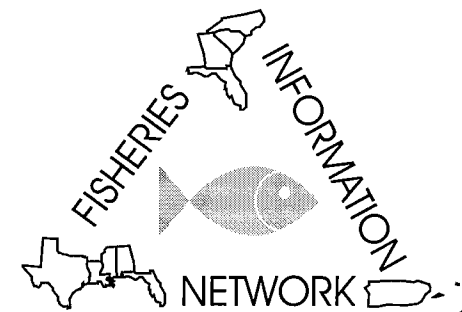
The commercial data collection program will be a mandatory, trip-based system with all fishermen and dealers required to report standardized data elements. All catch and effort data should be collected at the trip-level with resolution for each gear and area combination and collection activities will follow the RecFIN(SE) quality control and quality assurance documentation.

The recreational data collection program will be an access-site intercept survey for catch data for the private/rental, charter/head boats, and shore modes and telephone survey with random sampling of households for effort data for the private/rental and shore modes. The RecFIN(SE) is currently conducting an evaluation of the best method for collecting for-hire effort data. All catch and effort data should be collected at the trip-level with possible resolution for each area fished and collection activities will follow the RecFIN(SE) quality control and quality assurance documentation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you need additional information concerning these programs, please contact David Donaldson at the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC), P.O. Box 726, Ocean Springs, MS 39566-0726, (228) 875-5912, via e-mail ddonaldson@gsmfc.org or the ComFIN/RecFIN(SE) Web page <http://www.gsmfc.org/fin.html>

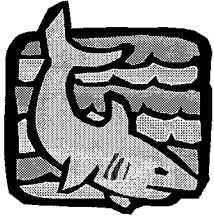
THE FISHERIES INFORMATION NETWORK (FIN)



A Cooperative State-Federal
Data Collection and Management
Program for the Southeast Region

PURPOSE

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



There are two separate programs under the FIN: the Commercial Fisheries Information Network (ComFIN) and the Southeast Recreational Fisheries Information Network [RecFIN(SE)]. The ComFIN and RecFIN(SE)

Committees consist of the signatories to the MOU or their designees, and are responsible for planning, managing, and evaluating the programs. Agencies represented by signatories to the MOU are:

- National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service
- Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources/Marine Resources Division
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection/Florida Marine Research Institute
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
- North Carolina Department of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources
- Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources
- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources
- Caribbean Fishery Management Council
- Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
- South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
- Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
- Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEED

The need for a comprehensive and cooperative data collection program has never been greater because of the magnitude of the commercial and recreational fisheries and the differing roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved. Many southeastern stocks targeted by commercial and recreational users are now stressed, due primarily to excessive harvest and habitat loss and degradation. The information needs of today's management regimes require data which are statistically sound, long-term in scope, timely, and comprehensive.

The vital information needed to meet minimum management information requirements is lacking for many important fishery resources in the Region. This deficiency has been recognized by management agencies, and attempts have been made to improve and expand current efforts. Although considerable progress has been made in the collection of fishery statistics, the continuing changes in the nature and status of marine commercial and recreational fisheries in the Region and the increasingly

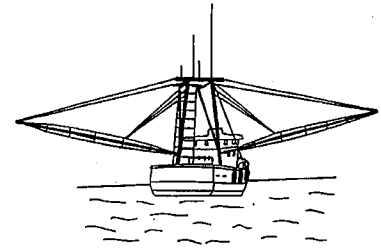


complex management regimes are creating ever-increasing demands for more comprehensive, accurate, and timely data.

EVOLUTION OF PROGRAM

Efforts by state and federal agencies to develop a cooperative program for the collection and management of commercial and recreational fishery data in the Region began in the mid 1980s. In 1992, the NMFS formally proposed a planning activity to establish the RecFIN(SE). Planning was conducted by a multi-agency Plan Development Team through October 1992, at which time the program partners approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which established clear intent to implement the RecFIN(SE). In 1994, the NMFS initiated a formal process to develop a cooperative State/Federal program to collect and manage commercial fishery statistics in the Region. A concept paper outlined a

strategy and schedule for developing the program and completing a strategic plan. It emphasized a cooperative program in conjunction with state and federal fishery management agencies, regional fishery management councils, interstate marine fisheries commissions, and other organizations concerned with marine fishery management. Due to previous work and NMFS action, the Southeast



Cooperative Statistics Committee (SCSC) developed an MOU and a Framework Plan for the ComFIN. During the development of the ComFIN MOU, the SCSC, in conjunction with the RecFIN(SE) Committee, decided to combine the MOU to incorporate the RecFIN(SE). The combined MOU creates the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) which is composed of both the ComFIN and RecFIN(SE). The MOU confirms the intent of the signatory agencies to participate in implementing the ComFIN and RecFIN(SE).

SCOPE OF THE PROGRAM

The scope of the FIN includes the Region's commercial and recreational fisheries for marine, estuarine, and anadromous species, including shellfish. Constituencies served by the program are state and federal agencies responsible for management of fisheries in the Region. Direct benefits will also accrue to federal fishery management councils, the interstate marine fisheries commissions, the National Marine Fisheries Service, National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the NOAA Marine Sanctuaries Program. Benefits which accrue to management of fisheries will benefit not only commercial and recreational fishermen and the associated fishing industries, but the resources, the states, and the nation.

