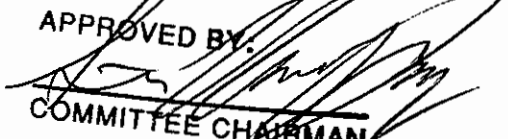


APPROVED BY:   
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**OYSTER TECHNICAL TASK FORCE  
MINUTES  
January 12-14, 2010  
St. Petersburg, Florida**

Moderator, **Steve VanderKooy**, called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. The following members 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  
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX

**Staff**

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ralph Hode, GSMFC, EDRP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Debbie McIntyre, GSMFC, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Richard Fulford, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Leslie Craig, NOAA Restoration, St. Petersburg, FL

**Adoption of Agenda**

**VanderKooy** reviewed the agenda and noted that, depending on TTF members' availability through the week, the agenda would be modified. However, the key section that would require the most time is the Recommendations section, therefore, the group would start there and pick up other sections as needed. Also, Dr. Fulford had a limited time schedule and the stock assessment would be addressed at his convenience.

**Approval of Minutes**

**VanderKooy** handed out two sets of minutes for review and approval – one set from the New Orleans meeting in October and the other from the conference call later the same month.

**October 14-16, 2009** – *Supan moved to approve the minutes as written, Robinson seconded and the motion passed.*

October 30, 2009 Conference Call – *Supan moved to approve the minutes with a minor correction on Page 2, Robinson seconded and the motion passed.*

### Introduction and Housekeeping Items

VanderKooy stated that the Table of Contents everyone received was the most current copy, based on the actual sections that have been drafted so far. Items that are still expected have been left as ambiguous but, for the most part, everything that has been received to date is in this draft. Some of these sections may be combined over the course of the review that takes place at this meeting.

VanderKooy will provide the completed drafts following this meeting, but each member will need to review them and make suggestions to rearrange or revise any of the concepts presented here.

Many changes were made directly to the document and will be included in the draft version that will be sent out after the meeting. Specific changes that require additional work from members will be addressed here. Notes are also included and highlighted periodically in the document where additional material may be needed. Most new material was noted with blue highlighting.

**NOTE:** *VanderKooy renumbered the sections in the minutes to reflect the combining of Sections 9 and 10 by Keithly at the meeting. Since the draft sections, which will be provided after the meeting will use the updated section numbers, the minutes will discuss the sections with the same corrections.*

### Section 12 – Management Considerations and Recommendations Section

VanderKooy informed the group that this section has not really been touched since September of 2008. Most of the other sections needed to be completed before firm recommendations could be made. Berrigan suggested that everyone look at the micro-organization of this section. The section has been developed to identify specific problems or issues, provide both the positive and negative sides of the issue, and the recommendations or options available to the states to address the problem. In some cases, examples of how some states may have already addressed certain issues have been included in the narrative. Berrigan would like to see more examples from each state where relevant. VanderKooy suggested that each state representative should draft a short paragraph to insert into the appropriate sections and provide them to Berrigan or VanderKooy via e-mail. Many of the examples were provided and included during the meeting. If the problems identified or rationale for the recommendations has NOT been introduced prior to this section, the appropriate TTF members should look at their sections and add where needed.

Weeks asked if it would be appropriate to strengthen all the recommendations in this section by using words like “managers *should* develop” rather than “are *encouraged*”. Berrigan stated that, in most of the states, managers cannot make changes themselves since a lot of these

decisions go through the legislature or other agencies. It is often necessary to go before those agencies and have the marine agency propose recommendations from the IJF Oyster Management Plan. It was the consensus of the group that it is a good idea for us to make firm management recommendations. **Berrigan** stated that that is the real value of the regional management plan: to help the states justify management decisions because it was shown to be needed or useful in the regional management plan.

### **12.3 Management Objectives**

**Weeks** suggested that the oysters are critical for ecosystem based management strategies and that their importance needs to be addressed immediately as an objective of the plan. A placeholder was made and **Weeks** offered to develop a paragraph or two regarding this.

### **12.4 Specific Management Measures to Attain Management Objectives**

#### **Monitoring and Assessment**

This section was moved forward in the recommendations section due to the need for data in support of the stock assessment section being developed by **Arnold**, **Fulford**, and **Powell**. Although the fishery independent and dependent subsections were separated, the considerations and subsequent recommendations for both were combined. This section will get a lot more input on specific recommendations as Section 11-Assessment is completed. Likewise, there will be compatible language in the Data and Research Needs (Section 13) to address data deficiencies needed for use in stock assessment models in the future.

#### **Water Management Projects**

There are a few examples already in this section, but additional state examples may be helpful. Items were placed for Alabama and Mississippi but need to be fleshed out by **Herrmann** and **Randal**. Louisiana's diversion example needs more information as well.

#### **Coastal Development**

**Arnold** inquired about a survey conducted by the Nature Conservancy regarding oyster issues and public knowledge of the intrinsic value of oysters. **Craig** stated that the survey results have not been released but would be available soon. **Arnold** felt that this section could not be completed at this time but should have a place holder. **Craig** will try to flesh this section out when the survey is released.

#### **Destruction of Reefs**

**Arnold** suggested it may be necessary to have a section somewhere in this document talking about the value of all reefs and determine if there is a restitution value for oyster reef as habitat. **Weeks** mentioned that there was an economic, non-market valuation of

several Texas bays but she was not sure if oyster reefs were included or not. **Weeks** will check on this and provide more information.

### **Size Restrictions**

The repercussions of the removal of size limits were discussed and the question asked “If sized limits were removed, how far down would the harvest size fall?” It was agreed that the existing size limits were market-driven (for shucking) and the market today is driven by consumer preference for smaller oysters (for half-shell). The question is how to manage the fishery for both. Lease product and wild-caught product are totally different and size limits don’t apply to leased product in several states. The lease product is able to provide a much smaller oyster for the half shell market. So is there any logic to continuing to have a 3” size limit and, if there are more small oysters removed, would there be enough spat provided by the oysters that grow on sea walls and in restricted areas? Is there any value to having a 3” size limit and was it originally designed for maximized yield in shucking?

The members evaluated making any recommendations related to a smaller size or elimination of the size limit entirely. Essentially, there are three tiers of recommendations: maintain, reduce, and eliminate. Biologically there was little concern over changing a size limit. From an enforcement perspective, reducing the minimum size does nothing to help officers. They still need to check sacks periodically for undersized oysters. This enforcement effort would be eliminated if the minimum size limit was eliminated.

### **Gear Requirements (Restrictions)**

**Supan** said that, in Louisiana, they are starting to refer to harvest as “raking” rather than “dredging” because of the confusion between shell dredging and oyster dredging, and because of the negative view of the term “dredging” in general. This has been discussed before by the TTF but no final decision was ever made. In some places, in the current FMP draft, the terms have varied and have also included “mechanical harvest”.

### **Harvesting Seasons and Harvesting Areas**

A number of issues were discussed related to the enforceability of limiting harvest areas during certain times of the year. Some areas are split, with half of the reef open and the other half closed, making law enforcement difficult. **Goodrich** explained that this subject was discussed at the ISSC meeting and recommendations were made to look at a vessel monitoring system (VMS) for oyster boats. The vessels equipped with VMS can be tracked and enforcement can even monitor when a dredge is dropped over a reef. The cost is the biggest deterrent at this time although a number of options exist.

**Goodrich** stated that enforcement representatives went before leaseholders and talked to them about it. The response was very positive because the leaseholder could control poaching and monitor sub-leasing and contracted harvesters. It is sometimes very hard to enforce harvest activities and the comingling of products, when closed and opened areas are in close proximity.

**Robinson** stated that the use of vessel monitoring as a tool could actually open up areas that have otherwise been off limits, because there had been no good way to enforce those boundaries. But, with the vessel monitoring technology, you could actually increase the area in which industry could operate, in some cases. In the case of Texas' lease fishery, they could open some areas for transplant that are not opened now because of their location and proximity to other areas. It was agreed that the vessel monitoring system would allow a lot more flexibility with openings and closures generally.

The use of VMS would be included in the Enforcement recommendations later in the document. **Goodrich** would flesh that section with the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee at their meeting in March.

### **Limited Access**

There are a couple of items still in need of addressing here.

### **Revenue Sources (Licenses, User Fees, and/or Taxes)**

There are a couple of examples provided as placeholders that need to be fleshed out. Each state should look at the highlighted section and determine if additional information is required.

### **Enhanced Enforcement**

Several items were addressed from the old FMP and added by the members. **Goodrich** would take this section to the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee to further discuss and develop at their meeting in March.

### **Cooperative Management Programs**

This section requires considerable consolidation still. If the concept has not been adequately introduced and explained elsewhere, it needs a place earlier in the plan. There are several examples which need to be developed and added by each state representative. Placeholders currently for Alabama and Louisiana, **Herrmann** and **Lezina** will flesh out. Other states need to contribute if appropriate.

### **Non-Commercial Reef Planting**

Non-commercial reef planting is the concept of developing oyster reefs for purposes other than production and harvest. This section needs to be drafted and **Craig** indicated a willingness to look at it. The management implications include a source of both spat and broodstock, as well as, habitat and habitat restoration (natural breakwaters, bank stabilization, low profile fishing reefs, etc).

### **Aquaculture**

**Supan** will conduct a final review of this section and make any additional suggestions or additions.

### Vessel Sewage Discharge and No Discharge Zones

**Herrington** needs to review this section, be sure it is complete, and consolidate or expand it if necessary.

### Point Source Pollution

This section has no considerations at this time. **All** need to review and determine if it is complete. If material needs to be added, including the pros and cons under Considerations, members should draft them and provide to **Berrigan** and **VanderKooy**.

### Section 13 – Research and Data Needs

The data needs were organized by section as they appear in the FMP (i.e. biology, habitat, threats, etc). The group added the items they felt needed additional research or additional data collection. This is essentially the “wish list” if money were made available long-term. There is expected to be redundancy between the recommendations and this section. However, this is also where less essential items, that do not have a pressing priority, can be included. Each TTF member is to review the items and add or recommend modifications, if any, that apply to their section or state. **VanderKooy** will ask **Herrington** to generate a list as far as public health is concerned for this section.

**VanderKooy** will ask **Nelson** for some input regarding the industry needs (the guys that run the shops.)

**Keithly** will include the results of a study done at the University of Maryland which had some plausible estimates of how much people would pay to increase reefs because it increases the habitat for fishery.

### Section 11 – Assessment of the Gulf of Mexico Stock(s)

**Arnold** provided an overview of the section as it stands currently. **Arnold** blended **Powell's** original presentations with the information provided by **Fulford** specific to the Gulf data. **Fulford** had provided **Arnold** with some comments and a short outline to help develop the background information on the available models. **Arnold** pointed out that everyone has already seen this information but not in this order. Editing is welcomed, but this is **Powell's** transcript, and he would probably be the best person to review it. **Powell** has agreed to provide the editing but will not be able to do so until mid-February.

**Fulford** will finish fleshing out the Gulf exercise (**Assessment Modeling Using Available GOM Data**) over the next couple of weeks and provide something to **Arnold** for inclusion. **Fulford** presented questions regarding some of the harvest season data from Florida and

Louisiana. **Berrigan** stated that the collection dates are not uniform from 1983 up to today. They have varied, sometimes quarterly, sometimes semi-annually, and sometimes more frequently. **Berrigan** pointed out to **Fulford** that early work in the Apalachicola Bay has shown there to be such variability between reefs that there may be reefs that are totally depleted on one side of the bay, and reefs on the other side of the bay that are thriving. That is considered normal. **Berrigan** noted that, from his perspective, getting a bay-wide assessment would be less important than assessing specific reefs. **Berrigan** provided additional data to **Fulford**.

**Fulford** stated that there is a recipe related to understanding the disarticulation rate, understanding the mortality rate, and the influence of harvest on the mortality rate. We need a recipe, independent of that, that can be presented for a basic survey to generate data for the model.

Some work is still needed throughout the section including **Data Inventory, Data Needs, Etc.** In addition, there are a lot of questions embedded in the document that need further addressing. Several will be handled by **Powell** but others will be addressed by the TTF, hopefully.

#### **Section 6 – Public Health Concerns Introduction and History**

**Herrington** provided an overview of his section via conference call. He and **VanderKooy** had essentially condensed all of the sections to reach the current version with as little redundancy as possible. **VanderKooy** pointed out that the definitions from model ordinance for the growing area classifications have been moved to the appendix. **VanderKooy** noted that there is not an extensive discussion of post harvest processing (PHPs) but this will be addressed further in the Economics section. It was realized that the heavy metal and pollution contamination portion of this section had been removed from Section 6 and **VanderKooy** will locate the deleted table of information which includes chemical, industrial, and other types of pollutants. **VanderKooy** advised everyone to read Section 6 and the two appendices that are essentially finished (Sections 16.3 and 16.4). Changes can still be made if necessary.

#### **Section 9 – Descriptions of Economic Characteristics**

**Keithly** indicated that Sections 9 and 10 should be combined and **VanderKooy** will renumber the sections that follow accordingly. **Keithly** noted that a few of the tables and figures still needed updating through 2008 data. **Keithly** will update “Dockside Oyster Price” when his grad student returns. They had done an analysis which would update Table 9.3 with the correct Chesapeake numbers. **Keithly** is to add a graph on the impact of oyster imports on the Gulf product. The primary sources of imported oysters are Canada and South Korea. **Keithly** will complete the sections “Post-Harvest Treatment”, “Imports”, and “Non-Economic Value.” **Keithly** will provide a paragraph on the efficiency of leasing versus open access fisheries. **Keithly** will have this work complete by **February 1**.

#### **Section 10 – Social and Cultural Characteristics of Oyster Fishermen and Their Communities**

**Weeks** went over her section briefly and received electronic comments from **Keithly** which she would review and incorporate after the meeting. If anyone has additional comments, they need to provide them to **Weeks** for inclusion; the section is pretty much finished otherwise.

### Section 3 – Description of Stocks Comprising the Management Unit (MU)

**Geiger** and **Robinson** will provide the final genetics section when complete and **VanderKooy** will send it out to everyone via e-mail. A section will be added on oyster anatomy as well.

**Geiger** will continue to develop and draft an introductory section that actually addresses how stock units really separate, as well as, how management of one area affects another through things like dispersal and recruitment.

### Section 4 – Habitat

**O'Brien** stated that she had not received much information by the deadline of October 31<sup>st</sup>. Basically, she incorporated what she had, but some areas are still incomplete. **Berrigan** suggested that, with regard to the tables, if a cell is blank because there isn't any information, it should be noted as not available.

**VanderKooy** stressed that this section needs to be reviewed by everyone. If anyone has comments, make them clear, provide the text, and provide the reference.

### Section 5 – Threats to Survival

**Lezina** stated that he is currently going through three pages of comments following the conference call. An extensive review was done by Dr. Overstreet from GCRL and should be acknowledged. *Lezina promised a final draft by early February.* At that point, the section needs to be thoroughly reviewed by everyone. **Lezina** will include specific comments as to what he still needs, if anything, in that final draft.

### Section 7 – Fishery Management Jurisdiction

**VanderKooy** stated that we are missing a few key components in the state information throughout Section 7.2. Each state rep needs to review their own state section and determine if it is complete.

Alabama's portion is pretty much complete.

There is a lot of stuff missing from Mississippi. **Randall** will provide some of this information when he gets back in his office.

Louisiana is complete all of the way through to the Health Department. **Lezina** will send recent changes to **VanderKooy**.

Just about everything is complete on Texas. **Robinson** will take a look at this information and may expand on it.



**VanderKooy** will send out Section 7 in its entirety to everybody so that each state's information can be thoroughly reviewed and tweaked quickly.

### **Section 8 – Description of Fishery Activities**

This section remains the most in need of drafting. **Herrmann** went over the changes he had made to the historical overview of the fishery. **VanderKooy** summarized what he and **VanHoose** had provided. While all of the states had figures and tables that were pretty much up-to-date, there was virtually NO current text for the states. With the exception of Alabama, any text, by state, is from the original FMP.

Again, each state rep (**Berrigan/Geiger, Robinson, Lezina, and Randal**) must draft their own state commercial and non-commercial fishing histories and provide the information to **Herrmann** no later than **March 1**.

### **Section 16.1 - Glossary**

The Glossary had a few new terms that had been supplied by **Herrington** some time ago. Any additional terms from the final draft sections should be noted and a definition supplied to **VanderKooy**.

### **Section 16.2 Aquaculture/Mariculture**

This section needs to be reviewed but is basically considered complete unless someone says otherwise. Comments should be provided to **Supan**.

### **Section 16.3 – Growing Area Classifications**

The detailed information in this section is out of the Model Ordinance and was removed from Section 6. This may be referred to, when necessary, from the rest of the FMP rather than repeating the same information.

### **Section 16.4 – Cultch Materials**

**VanderKooy** had drafted some background information regarding the various cultch materials used historically and some of the problems and benefits associated with each. This information is provided to compliment the tables with the historical planting information. It was agreed by all that the planting narrative for each state, currently in various places in the fisheries section, will be moved here.

### **Assignment Status and Section Updates**

**Arnold** suggested that teams be assigned to review specific sections of the document rather than have the entire group review everything. It was the consensus of the group that this is a good

idea. **VanderKooy** will set up the teams after the outstanding sections are completed (specifically the Fisheries section).

All maps are being given to Jeff Rester at GSMFC. **Berrigan** gave the Apalachicola Bay maps to **VanderKooy**.

### Final Draft Completion Schedule and GSMFC Review

**VanderKooy** will send out all drafts to the TTF members for their review. Please send all comments and necessary text to the authors so that they can revise their sections accordingly.

Everyone needs to read the sections. **VanderKooy** would like to have a final draft by the beginning of summer to send out for review by the Technical Coordinating Committee.

A conference call will be scheduled (hopefully in March) to review sections, one at a time, when all necessary information is gathered.

### Other Business

**VanderKooy** suggested that the group consider adding **Dr. Fulford** to the Task Force as a Stock Assessment representative. He also stated that **Powell** had given a presentation and his material is being used by the Task Force, so he should be given extra credit. Dr. Eric Powell will be added to the contributing authors.

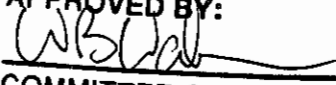
*Supan made a motion to add Dr. Fulford to the Task Force as a Stock Assessment representative, Weeks seconded and the motion passed.*

**VanHoose's** name will be in the acknowledgements, even though he is no longer employed with the Department.

It was the consensus of the group that the term "considerations" be used instead of listing "advantages" and "disadvantages" in each section. **VanderKooy** will make these changes throughout the document.

*With no further business, Supan made the motion to adjourn, the motion was seconded by Goodrich, and the group adjourned at 4:30 p.m.*

**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Monday, March 8, 2010  
Orange Beach, Alabama**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**B. Wallace** called the meeting to order at 8:30 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  
Vernon Minton, *GSMFC Commissioner*, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL

**Others**

Richard Fulford, GCRL/USM, Ocean Springs, MS  
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Dale Diaz, 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  
Joe Gill, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ellie Roche, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL  
Judy Jamison, GSAFF, Tampa, FL  
Dave Burrage, MS-AL Sea Grant, Biloxi, MS  
Matt Hill, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Wesley Devers, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Ronnie Luster, CCA, Houston, TX  
Tommy Williams, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA  
Joey Shepherd, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Baton Rouge, LA

**Staff**

Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Debbie McIntyre, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Jeff Rester, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Introductions**

**Chairman Wallace** led the introductions of the MAC and the audience.

## Approval of Agenda

Wallace asked Rester to present a short overview under other business on the Cote Blanche Salt Dome and the proposed project to store natural gas in the dome. The agenda was approved by consent.

## Approval of Minutes (October 13, 2009)

*Buchanan moved to accept the minutes as written, Guillory seconded and the minutes were approved.*

## Review of 2009 Gulf Menhaden Season and Forecast for 2010

**Smith** provided a review of the 2009 reduction season. The final landings for reduction were 457,457 mt which was up 7.5% over 2008 and up 2% over previous 5-yr average. Crewing vessels was not as troublesome as in recent years and 2009 had a lack of tropical activity in the northern GOM. There was a windy start for the fishing season with high winds in April through mid-May. Landings in June were better with generally fair weather across GOM as summer set in. There were good catches at Moss Pt, Empire, and Abbeville. Of note, Empire reported record June landings. Yields of oil went up in June and continued through the summer. **Smith** noted that poor catches continued at Cameron due to persistent southerly winds. In August, the industry had good weather and good fishing early in the month until TS Claudette made landfall in the Florida panhandle on Aug 17<sup>th</sup>. The associated wind and rain stirred the nearshore waters making it difficult to spot fish and landings down at most plants through end August. September catches were generally good and continued into October.

Fishing effort in 2009 was up slightly at 377,500 vessel-ton-weeks (VTWs) with 41 vessels (39 steamers and 2 runboats) operating at 4 plants. The age data indicates that nearly 80% of all the fish landed in 2009 were age-2s. This high proportion of age-2s in the catch is unusual, and follows a similar pattern observed in 2008. The low proportion of age-1s in 2008 suggested a weak 2007 year class, yet the 2009 landings were still dominated by that 2007 year class as age-2 fish. The poor showing of age-1 fish in the catch during 2009 suggests that age-2 fish may not be as abundant as in recent years. The high proportions of age-2 fish in the catch of recent years and lack of age-1s is perplexing. There were several options offered as possible explanations. Perhaps, the younger fish may just be inaccessible to the fishery, and are resident in 'inside' waters where they are unavailable to purse-seine gear.

**Smith** forecasts that in 2010, we can expect 4 factories fishing with 43 vessels (40 steamers and 3 run boats) with 370,000 VTWs of effort with landings around 463,000 mt.

## Update on the Atlantic Menhaden Fishery

**Smith** also provided an update on the 2009 Atlantic menhaden fishery and other issues related to this fishery. The final landings for 2009 were 143,754 mt which was up 2% over 2008, but down 11% from previous 5-yr average. Atlantic landings were 31% of Gulf landings in 2009. Most of the landings (approx. 60%) were from Chesapeake Bay, but fishing occurred as far north

as New Jersey and south to Beaufort, North Carolina. Once again, the industry fished well below the 'cap' in Chesapeake Bay which for 2009 was about 122,000 mt because of the 'underage' situation in 2008.

In November, the ASMFC extended the Chesapeake Cap for an additional 3 yrs (2011-2013). Finally, the Atlantic menhaden stock assessment will be peer reviewed (SEDAR 20) this week (March 9-12) in Charleston, South Carolina; it includes data through 2008.

Bait is becoming a bigger component on the East coast. Atlantic menhaden bait landings now represent 20-25% of total menhaden landings coastwide. The New England Fishery Management Council cut the Atlantic herring quota from around 194,000 mt in 2009 to 109,000 mt in 2010 and it is estimated that Maine lobstermen alone used 60,000 mt of herring for bait in 2008. With the reductions in the herring quota, Maine might need to import 20,000 mt of menhaden for lobster bait in 2010.

### **Fishing Effort**

In fall 2007, the GMAC requested that the NMFS Beaufort Lab explore alternate units of nominal fishing effort for the gulf menhaden fishery that might replace the traditional effort unit, the vessel-ton-weeks (VTWs), for predicting annual menhaden forecasts. **Smith** noted that VTWs were appropriate for current use in his forecast models.

The main concern **Smith** has is that the fishery is 'artificially' efficient because they use spotter planes to locate schools and the literature warns about using CPUE in situations like that; there could be population problems but CPUE still be relatively high. The other problem is that while the vessels unload weekly, not every day at sea includes net sets. **Smith** will continue to look at this more and work to find something that everyone is comfortable with if VTWs is no longer useful to the states and industry.

### **Louisiana Forecast for 2010**

The LDWF provided its forecast for gulf menhaden in Louisiana waters. **Guillory** reported that their models include environmental factors such as water temperature, salinity, Mississippi River discharge, and southeast LA Rainfall as well as fishery-independent data (the LDWF's juvenile menhaden trawls catches) and fishery-dependent data (fishing effort). Generally, "cold and dry" winters (low temperatures, low rainfall, low tides, low river discharge, high salinities, low incidence of south winds) are favorable for recruitment and "warm and wet" winters (high temperatures, high rainfall, high river discharge, low salinities, high incidence of south winds) are not favorable for recruitment. **Guillory** reported that the 2008-2009 winter was both warm and dry suggesting that recruitment and subsequent year class strength could be below average. However, the last couple years have not fit the model conditions and recruitment based on the Louisiana trawl surveys has still been above average. **Guillory** predicts that with the forecast and the expected effort, the 2010 Louisiana landings should range between 286,000 – 386,000 mt.

## Review of the Texas 'Cap' in 2009

**Mambretti** spoke briefly on the monitoring of the 31M lb Texas 'Cap'. He reported that 2009 was the first season officially implementing the quota and the industry was very cooperative and there were only minor issues that were quickly resolved related to CDFR reporting. The quota was not reached - primarily due to the weather conditions at Cameron which is the primary plant that operates in Texas waters - thus, for 2010 the Cap will gain a 10% 'underage' allowance from the 2009 fishing season.

## Funding for 2010 Gulf Menhaden Sampling Efforts

At this time there is no funding available through the GSMFC's FIN program to pay for the gulf menhaden port samplers. It was hoped that the LDWF might be able to reprogram some funds to cover the costs of the Louisiana sampling. It was reported that there were not any funds available from the LDWF either. The amount needed to continue the sampling is around \$60K. The committee agreed that NOAA needed to begin to focus back on gulf menhaden and find a way to continue this critical data collection. *The MAC moved to request that the S-FFMC move Gulf menhaden issues further up the line to NOAA to resolve the lack of funding for menhaden data collection, especially the port samplers in the Gulf. The motion passed unanimously.* This is an issue on the East coast as well as the Gulf and it was suggested that Larry Simpson, Vince O'Shea (ASMFC), and NOAA representatives need to get together and figure out how to bring menhaden data collection back onto NOAA's radar; not all fisheries work is about grouper/snapper.

## Promotion of Bait Menhaden in Louisiana

**Guillory** reported that with the Gulf has lost a large share of the bait supply in the crab and crawfish industry within the Gulf. LDWF had put out an RFP to develop a business plan to build a bait fishery utilizing gulf menhaden. They have had one application and are requesting more information from that applicant. In a nut shell, the Gulf no longer has a purse-seine bait fishery for menhaden which could provide bait to the crawfish and crab fisheries in the region. Now that the East coast is having a reduction in the herring fishery, there is a good opportunity to grow an industry in the northern GOM. Typically, the local fishermen prefer the larger menhaden found on the East coast and believe they hold up better in the traps. **Guillory** will keep the group updated on the progress.

## Gulf Menhaden Energetics Study

**Dr. Rich Fulford** (GCRL/USM) provided an overview of the project he is looking to start with a graduate student. He is interested in identifying the food webs that menhaden fit in. He also is planning to look at foraging efficiency in gulf menhaden similar to the work recently completed on the East coast. He noted the importance of understanding the filtering capability of menhaden and how ontogenetic shifts in filtering ability leads to differences in the trophic position the age classes of menhaden occupy in the food web. **Fulford** plans to survey the isotope signatures of the various prey (phytoplankton, zooplankton, and detritus) and identifying where various

sized/aged menhaden feed based on their isotope signatures. He plans to begin this work this summer with the cooperation of the industry and once his student arrives.

### **Gulf Menhaden Website Update**

**VanderKooy** provided the latest draft of the changes to the gulf menhaden website hosted by the GSMFC. There have been a number of editorial changes made as well as updates to data and general information. There is still on-going discussion related to the effort issue and how best to represent the changes in effort over time. Going back to the earlier discussion item, while the VTWs is a more course measure of effort, there are problems with trying to convert that to some sort of catch per unit of effort. **VanderKooy** and **Smith** would continue to resolve this and provide their final suggestions to the MAC for discussion.

### **State Reports on Temperature Related Issues**

Each state briefly discussed the cold snaps from this past winter. While a number of finfish, mammals, turtles, and birds were affected, there were very few menhaden kills.

### **Gulf Menhaden SEDAR Schedule**

The committee was provided the SEDAR schedule and Gulf menhaden are still in the process with the assessment expected to begin in 2011. Doug Vaughan at NMFS Beaufort will retired in early 2011, but Kyle Schurtzer at NMFS Beaufort, a co-author on the previous Gulf menhaden assessment, will probably be the lead analyst on future gulf menhaden assessments.

### **Other Business**

**Rester** updated the group on the proposed natural gas storage in a salt dome currently being mined in Louisiana. The primary concern related to the proposal is the fact that the brine is being dumped out a 23 mile pipeline; however, the pipeline only goes as far as the 3 mile line offshore. Apparently, the applicants don't want to go through the process of getting the Federal permits required to move the outflow farther offshore. **Rester** will stay informed regarding this proposed project and provide updates to the MAC as needed. **Lukens** reported that Omega Protein plans to send a letter of concern to the appropriate agencies responsible for permitting the proposed project.

*With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.*

APPROVED BY:

  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**Monday, March 8, 2010**

**Perdido Beach, AL**

**Chairman Kerwin Cuevas** called the meeting to order at 8:30 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  
Michael Harden, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
John Froeschke, GMFMC, Tampa, FL  
Steve Turner (proxy for Guy Davenport), NMFS, Miami, FL

**Staff**

David Donaldson, GSMFC Assistant Director, 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  
Janet Lumpkin, GSMFC, FIN Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Joe Ferrer, GSMFC, IT Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Joe Shepard, LADWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Randy Pausina, LADWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Nicole Shaffer, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Joe Gill, Ocean Springs, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was approved and adopted as written.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the Data Management Subcommittee meeting held on October 12, 2009 in Biloxi, MS were approved as written.



### Status of Biological Sampling Activities

Review of collection and analysis activities – **G. Bray** intended to discuss the otolith collection numbers for 2009 but problems with FIN Discoverer software prevented any results compilation. Bray stated that once these problems are fixed the results from 2009 otolith collection efforts will be emailed to the states and he will contact them individually for feedback. **Bray** also reported that 2008 age data have been delivered and loaded into the FIN Data Management System (DMS).

Status of web-based data entry program – **D. Bellais** reported each state has entered completed data entry for 2009 sample data. Alabama has already started entering 2009 age data along with 2010 sample data. If state data entry personnel have questions as they start entering age data questions should be forwarded to **Bellais**.

### Status of Commercial Vessel Information Project

**D. Donaldson** reported that FIN has been working to collect commercial fishing vessel data for a long time. To help facilitate this process a contractor was hired to collect and compile this information from each state. The contractor has contacted all of the Gulf States. Texas and Mississippi are nearly completed. Florida has provided the majority of their commercial vessel data. Louisiana is working to pull their data and provide it to the contractors in the near future. Alabama is planning to send data to the contractors in 1-2 weeks. **Donaldson** stated he hopes to have the final report prior to the next FIN meeting in June 2010.

### Presentation of Gulf Fisheries One-Stop Shop (GFOSS) Project

**D. Bellais** reported GSMFC has agreed to house the regional one-stop shop for the Gulf of Mexico. GSMFC has the necessary hardware and the contractors are preparing to send the software for testing purposes. The initial task will be using the yearly summary non-confidential data for reporting purposes. Confidential data might be added to the system at a later date. **C. Denson** asked what data elements will be utilized for this task. **Bellais** stated the initial step is providing landings data by year, by species, and possibly by gear. **Donaldson** stated this is a national reporting system under Fisheries Information System (FIS). The goal is to have a national database for reporting purposes and the plan is to utilize the regional FIN programs to provide the required data.

### Updates on Gulf of Mexico For-Hire Logbook Projects

#### MRIP

**D. Donaldson** reported MRIP has developed a proposal to implement a pilot logbook program for the for-hire fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. The proposal focuses on the Corpus Christi area of Texas and the panhandle of Florida. The proposal currently is asking for \$400,000 for approximately 300 vessels in the pilot study. The costs could be significant if and when it is expanded to the entire fleet in the Gulf of Mexico. The proposal has been submitted to MRIP. The for-hire workgroup is waiting on confirmation that the proposal has been accepted.

Donaldson thinks that actual data collection will start sometime in 2010 but possibly later than the start of red snapper season. Several validation methods are going to be tested. An electronic reporting option will be provided along with a paper logbook.

#### LDWF

**M. Kasprzak** reported the voluntary for-hire logbook program is not working well in Louisiana. So far they have received little data. Louisiana is working on submitting some new legislation for consideration that would require mandatory reporting.

#### FFWC

**R. Cody** mentioned Florida attempted a voluntary electronic logbook in Florida using EDRP funds. The program had 1600 qualified possible participants and obtained only 26 actual participants. Money would be provided to participants but voluntary participation was still extremely low.

#### Discussion of Highly Migratory Species Sampling

**D. Donaldson** provided the executive summary from an MRIP project that attempted to characterize highly migratory species (HMS) anglers in the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. **Donaldson** asked that the subcommittee review this project summary and make recommendations to FIN regarding the next step in HMS sampling in the Gulf of Mexico. **Cody** asked if the recommendations from the HMS pilot surveys done in Florida would help in the decision making process for FIN making recommendations about future HMS data collection. **Donaldson** stated having the final report from the Florida pilot surveys could be helpful to the FIN committee in making a recommendation on an HMS sampling strategy. **Denson** asked if the primary goal is to improve HMS landings data or collect biological information on the HMS fishery. **Donaldson** stated the primary goal is to improve landings data as the current recreational survey does a poor job sampling the HMS fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. **Anson** asked how MRIP is going to use the results from the pilot programs to address gaps in data collection programs like HMS. **Donaldson** thinks MRIP will provide technical guidance and oversight but allow for implementation at the regional level. **Kasprzak** asked if the HMS workgroup was planning on additional pilot studies because she is concerned that there is a need to implement something permanent to improve HMS data collection in the Gulf of Mexico. **Donaldson** stated the HMS workgroup has completed all of their pilot studies in the Gulf of Mexico and is now waiting for recommendations from FIN as to the next course of action. **Denson** asked if funding would be available for an HMS data collection effort in the Gulf of Mexico. **Donaldson** stated there is funding available but it is not known if the cost of a Gulf of Mexico data collection program could be fully funded by MRIP. **The Data Management Subcommittee recommended that FIN explore developing a specialized survey for HMS sampling in the Gulf of Mexico.** **Cody** suggested that some preliminary results show MRIP data collection with minor changes could provide additional data to bolster HMS species for certain species.

## Discussion of Gulf Council Motion regarding Recreational Data Collection and Monitoring Programs

**D. Donaldson** mentioned that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) passed a motion at their April meeting about recreational data collection activities. The Council provided three alternatives that they wanted to bring to the states attention. The Council has expressed that if any of these alternatives were adopted the GSMFC and states agencies would be highly involved in the process. **Cody** asked how beneficial will landing tags be as the rate of discarded fish continues to increase. **J. Froeschke** stated that alternative 4 is being pursued through the data collection committee and future activity will likely be generated with that task. **Donaldson** suggested a council update at the June FIN meeting will be helpful. **Turner** is concerned that mandating an electronic logbook with alternative 4 could be problematic for data collectors. **Anson** also agreed with Tuner's statement.

## Review and approval of At-sea Sampling Protocols

**D. Donaldson** stated this issue was brought up at the prior DMS meeting but the Subcommittee decided they needed more time to review the document. **Cody** asked if the DMS can endorse the current at-sea sampling protocol document if MRIP is planning on making changes to their sampling protocols. **Donaldson** mentioned that if endorsed by DMS and the subsequently FIN, the document could still be amended and improved as new sampling methods arise. **Kasprzak** mentioned this is an important step to help FIN with planning and budgeting future at-sea sampling projects. **The DMS recommended that the at-sea sampling protocols document be sent to the FIN Committee for approval as an approved sampling protocol.**

## Status of Metadata Data Entry

**D. Bellais** reminded each state to continue entering, reviewing, and publishing their metadata. All states are having trouble allocating staff to time to continue this work. **Donaldson** asked the Subcommittee if it would be beneficial using a part time person housed at GSMFC to assist the states with metadata activities. All states agreed that an additional staff person would greatly assist them in continuing to expand their metadata work. **The DMS recommended that GSMFC via FIN explore the possibility of adding a part-time staff member to directly assist the states with entering, reviewing, and publishing their metadata.**

## Other business

**D. Donaldson** asked the states to get their 2009 commercial data into GSMFC as soon as possible. This group will have another commercial QA/QC session after the DMS meeting in October and everyone will need to have their 2009 data into Donna prior to that meeting.

*Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:50 p.m.*

**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Monday, March 8, 2010  
Orange Beach, Alabama**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Chairman **R. Hendon** called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. The following members and others were present:

**Members**

Read Hendon, *Chairman*, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Bob McMichael, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX  
John Froeschke *for Rick Leard*, GMFMC, Tampa, FL  
Myron Fischer, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA  
Gilmore "Butch" Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS

**Others**

Schuyler Dartez, LDWF, Grand Isle, LA  
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Terry Cody, Rockport, TX  
Craig Newton, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Joey Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Dick Waller, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Marcus Drymon, DISL, Dauphin Island, AL  
Sean Powers, USA, Mobile, AL

**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  
Gregg Bray, *RecFIN Programmer/Analyst*, Ocean Springs, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

The winter cruise and new format for sampling will be discussed under "Other Business." **B. McMichael** moved to accept the agenda as submitted. **J. Mareska** seconded and the motion passed.

### Approval of Minutes

**B. Pellegrin** asked to add "dependent" after fishery on the last line of the first paragraph on page 3, reading "important as fishery dependent CPUE becomes". **B. McMichael** moved to approve the October 12, 2009 minutes with this change. **F. Martinez** seconded and the motion passed.

### Administrative Report

**J. Rester** reported the Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey was completed last year. He said they also had a winter groundfish survey but did not have a winter plankton survey. That survey will be held every other year. He asked the Subcommittee again to please submit their data in a timely manner. He reminded them that this includes all data collected with SEAMAP funds. He then reminded the Subcommittee of the new field in the database named haul value. This field shows whether it was a good or bad trawl. He said to also put an explanation in the comment field.

### Costs of Gut Content Analysis and Processing Capabilities

**B. McMichael** gave a presentation on gut content analysis. He described what is involved in gut content analysis including the history of using gut content analysis, measurement methods, taxonomic resolutions, field collection, database entry, processing time and the cost of each sample. He said the samples processed through FWC cost approximately \$20.00/sample. Age and growth cost is approximately \$4.02/otolith. His complete presentation can be obtained from the GSMFC office

**J. Rester** asked **B. McMichael** if SEAMAP decided to do more gut content or otolith analysis, would their lab be able to process the samples for those prices. **B. McMichael** said yes, but if the samples increased by more than 5,000 they would have to add infrastructure costs. **L. Simpson** commented that the decision makers are moving towards ecosystem management and this is the type of information that is needed. He said SEAMAP should consider collecting data that can be used for ecosystem management.

### Stable Isotope Analysis Processing and Costs

**R. Hendon** gave a presentation on stable isotope analysis (SIA). He said identification of isotopic signature from tissues of organisms can be applied to food web models to draw direct inferences regarding trophic level. This would be used in conjunction with (not a replacement for) stomach content analyses. He said the estimated cost per sample is \$65.00/sample. He said the cost does not include SIA of prey items which would be necessary to establish baseline prey compositions. GCRL could process more samples with funding but they do have a limitation on freeze drying. Another freeze drier would have to be purchased. He said the cost for otolith processing is \$4.50 per otolith. His complete presentation can be obtained through the GSMFC office.

**R. Hendon** said the Cedar Point facility houses the equipment for SIA and space would not be an issue for expansion. **D. Donaldson** stated if SEAMAP wishes to pursue doing SIA they should utilize the expertise in the FIN Program when developing guidelines.

### SEAMAP Strategic Planning

**J. Rester** reported that he, D. Donaldson, and R. Hendon met with NMFS personnel to discuss SEAMAP strategic planning. He said that at the Joint SEAMAP meeting in August, L. Desfosse asked the SEAMAP Committees to decide what they envision for SEAMAP data sampling in the future. She suggested SEAMAP should set guidelines for current and future data needs that would be geared towards ecosystem management. **B. Pellegrin** stated there is a potential for the SEFSC to receive a large amount of funding that would be directed toward fishery independent sampling to increase the types and quality of data that could be used for stock assessments and ecosystem management. SEAMAP would be the ideal program to collect this data but a plan would have to be in place with logistics worked out to be ready when they receive the funding.

J. Rester showed a map of the stations where each SEAMAP member samples and asked how the station locations are determined. He said they need to be careful not to overlap. **B. Pellegrin** said the stations are randomly generated.

**J. Mareska** asked if the states' data are being used in stock assessments now. He said that would be a big hurdle as far as strategic planning. **B. Pellegrin** said the state data was not used in the red snapper assessment because the assessment was an update of the original and they did not want to change the methodology. When they do another full blown assessment, the data should be used because they have done comparative tows and determined there are no significant differences. **M. Fischer** stated the states and SEAMAP should insist to the SEDAR Data Committee that the SEAMAP data be used in assessments, and SEAMAP should be represented at all of their meetings. **D. Donaldson** suggested SEAMAP write a summary, a brief description on the type of data that SEAMAP collects to show that it will be useful in stock assessments. **M. Fischer** suggested asking the Council to insist the SEAMAP data be used and if it receives an affirmative vote, SEDAR will have to use it.

### SEAMAP Sponsored Fishery Independent Data Workshop

**B. McMichael** attended the South Atlantic fishery independent data workshop and gave a brief presentation. He said approximately fifty people from industry, federal, state, and university programs attended. The goal was to develop a fishery independent monitoring program for the southeast U.S. He said they broke down into three major groups, biology, gears, and experimental design. They developed a draft document which will be ready for review soon. After discussion, the Subcommittee decided to have a SEAMAP sponsored fishery independent workshop. The Subcommittee will send J. Rester suggestions on whom to invite, agenda items, etc. They plan to have the workshop in the September 2010 timeframe. **B. McMichael** offered to have the workshop at their facility.

### Alabama Vertical Line Sampling

**J. Mareska** gave a presentation on a new pilot study Alabama is proposing for vertical line sampling. He said Dr. John Walter of the SEFSC said there is a need for vertical line sampling to collect fishery independent data on reef fish within the Gulf of Mexico. The goals of the program would be to develop an index of relative abundance (CPUE); monitor age composition; better understand range dynamics; and develop estimates of mortality. The program will

incorporate random and fixed stations to accomplish the stated goals. He then explained the design of the program and stated the estimated costs. *After discussion, B. McMichael moved to start the pilot study using the design J. Mareska presented and existing SEAMAP funds. F. Martinez seconded and the motion passed.*

#### **Plans for the 2010 Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey**

**J. Rester** stated this was the first time for the Louisiana winter cruise and it was the first time Louisiana used the new protocols. **S. Dartez** reported they generated 40 sample sites for the winter cruise. He said they used the new protocol with 30 minute tows and were able to accomplish 33 trawl samples and 7 plankton samples. He said they were able to work up the samples between trawls but it will be more difficult in the summer because they will have a bigger catch. Storage may also be a problem.

After discussion on randomly generated sample sites, it was suggested that NMFS generate all the sites for the future cruises, and then the Subcommittee will meet via conference call to decide who will sample each site to avoid overlap and running time. Weather and mechanical breakdowns have to be taken into consideration also.

**R. Pausina** asked the Subcommittee to consider using another vessel from Louisiana for SEAMAP sampling. **J. Rester** said comparative tows will have to take place in order to approve using another vessel. **J. Rester** will research exactly what has been done in the past to bring on new vessels and will report to the Subcommittee, and they will discuss this via conference call or at the next meeting to set up protocols for vessel comparisons. If time permits, this can be discussed at the data workshop.

#### **Other Business**

**B. Pellegrin** reminded the Subcommittee to use the supplemental funding before the expiration date or SEAMAP will lose the funds. He said Karen Mitchell asked the states to consider continuing any of the work started with the supplemental funding. The Subcommittee said this will depend on future funding.

**J. Mareska** said Alabama has a new vessel and requested a new vessel ID number. **B. Pellegrin** said to contact Mark McDuff and he will copy J. Rester on the request.

**F. Martinez** stated Texas will purchase new winches with left over SEAMAP funds. The Subcommittee agreed no approval is necessary for the purchase.

**J. Rester** said the August meeting will be August 9-11, 2010 in St. Croix. He will contact the Subcommittee when the final arrangements are made.

*There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:16 p.m.*

APPROVED BY:  
*Traci Floyd For Tom*  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN *Wagner*

**TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES - 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Monday, March 8, 2010  
Orange Beach, Alabama**

Chairman **T. Wagner** called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.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  
Joe Gill, Ocean Springs, MS  
Bill Richardson, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Dave Burrage, MS-AL Sea Grant, Biloxi, MS  
Michael Hasden, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Vernon Minton, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Kathy VanderKooy, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Don VanderKooy, Guest, Kalamazoo, MI

**Staff**

Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Debbie McIntyre, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

*Guillory moved to accept the agenda. The motion was seconded by Perry and passed unanimously.*

**Approval of Minutes**

*Floyd moved to accept the minutes with minor changes. The motion was seconded by Guillory and passed unanimously.*

**Blue Crab Aquaculture Update**

**Perry** presented information on the current blue crab culturing program at the GCRL. She reported that the DMR has provided three ponds for grow out. The first pond was harvested and



they had very poor survival. The pond had no vegetation at all. She is optimistic that the other two ponds will have much better survivorship as they are vegetated. There has been a great interest in the bait crab market for recreational fishing. **Perry** is looking to harvest the last two ponds to provide small crabs for the spring cobia shootout. The DMR is working with the GCRL to move legislation through to allow for undersized, cultured crabs as live bait in recreational fishing tournaments.

**Wagner** mentioned that US Fish & Wildlife Service biologists in Brazoria, TX were inquiring about the possibility of stocking small young blue crabs from hatcheries as potential food sources for whooping cranes at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Austwell, TX. **Wagner** and **Perry** would provide background information to the biologists but it is believed to be cost prohibitive at the scale required to feed cranes in the wild.

**Gandy** noted that Florida was looking at intensive culture techniques and is in the process of designing adequate lab space for hatchery purposes.

#### **Status of Florida Lipofuscin Research**

**Gandy** reported that Florida is currently working on a three phase approach to the lipofuscin work. The first is complete and compared the left and right eyestalks in healthy crabs. There has been no difference and that should reduce sample size by 50% in healthy undamaged crabs.

The second phase investigates the viability of freezing samples short-term to increase efficiency when running multiple samples. They will look at the difference between fresh samples and those frozen two weeks.

The final stage involves lipofuscin-aging of known age crabs from their culture program. Once age standards are established, unknown age wild-caught crabs can be assayed.

#### **Gulf Stock Assessment Data Set Progress**

This item was tabled until **Pellegrin** could find the time to work with Dr. Richard Fulford (GCRL) and Mike Murphy (FWC) on the models. State members will submit their most recent data to **Pellegrin** for inclusion.

#### **Mercury Advisories Related to Blue Crab Consumption**

**VanderKooy** had sent out an article via e-mail late in 2009 related to sustainability certifications and noted that the writer was critical of the available information on blue crabs. The problem originates with watchdog groups and NGOs that make recommendations to consumers of fishery products on the safety and sustainability of various species available in the market. The article specifically addressed Gulf blue crabs based on recommendations from the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch and the Environmental Defense Fund websites. The information provided for the article was unclear and misleading when applied Gulf-wide.

It is expected that the health hazard mentioned originated from Lavaca Bay, Texas, and is specifically related to mercury deposits from 1965 to 1979. Once the source of contamination is established, the subcommittee would like to send a rebuttal to 'fix' the potential misinformation provided by the two groups. This request would be taken to the TCC for their approval prior to any letter going out representing the subcommittee.

The subcommittee agreed that the issue needs to be addressed at the source. *Perry moved to draft a letter to the EDF and Monterey Bay Aquarium asking for more information on their sources related to health advisories in the Gulf for blue crabs.* The motion passed unopposed.

Perry would work with Wagner, the FDA, and the state health agencies in drafting this letter.

### 2009 Fishery-Independent Data

Perry has been looking at fishery-independent data from Mississippi and Louisiana, comparing the long-term trends in abundance of blue crabs. She distributed charts to the committee. Alabama is working on getting their data to her so that the north-central Gulf data base can be updated. Generally, all the sampling gears indicate a downward trend over time, although there is variability annually. Perry reported that almost 23% of the annual variability could be attributed to global climate periods (wet, dry, cool, and warm.) The last decade has been marked with droughts and subsequent declines in crab abundance. It is unknown how those populations will rebound under different climatological conditions. Additional factors may include loss of habitat and changing predator/prey dynamics.

### Derelict Trap Cleanups

All five states held volunteer based trap cleanups in 2009-2010. Texas held theirs in mid-February and retrieved 1582 traps coast-wide. Louisiana held their cleanup on February 22 and collected 477 derelict traps. They noted that volunteer participation continues to be an issue. Mississippi retrieved 349 traps in their three day closure in late January. They will likely not hold a cleanup in 2011. Alabama directed their volunteer efforts to the upper bay and collected 287 traps. They also will not hold a cleanup in 2011. Finally, Florida held a state-wide blue crab cleanup which was spread over the whole year. There were six zones which were targeted roughly every three to four weeks. A total of 4,186 traps were removed from coastal waters in 2009. The future cleanups will stagger locations to allow for funds to be better used in dedicated cleanups. Florida noted that they collected 6,108 lobster and stone crab traps in the Florida Keys in 2009 as well.

VanderKooy updated the group on e-mails that he has been involved in with the Discovery Channel regarding their "Dirty Jobs" show in which they have inquired about the derelict crab trap cleanups. He requested that if anyone has other ideas for "Dirty Jobs" in the Gulf area in which the Discovery Channel could do a single trip that would encompass crab traps and something else to let him know. Discovery Channel is also going to shoot a final episode of "Deadliest Catch" in New Orleans this summer and would like to speak with some local fishermen regarding their experiences.

## State Reports

Florida – **Gandy** reported that the state-wide landings for blue crabs were down from 2007 by 51%. 2008 Gulf landings had a brief recovery after historic low landings in 2001. Gulf landings peaked in 2006 and have since fallen to historically low levels. The Gulf landings for 2008 were lower than the Atlantic for the first time since record keeping began. Total landings for 2009 are preliminary but, when you look at January through June, there is a 27% decline in landings when compared to 2008. From 2005-2007, drought conditions have been a large leader in explaining what is going on. The west coast was particularly hard hit by prolonged drought. There were very high coastal salinities. Early in 2008, rainfalls returned to near normal levels and have maintained that all the way through the present. The only concern was that, in those 24 months, the crab populations on the west coast were not rebounding as quickly as hoped. When looking at fishery-independent monitoring data, abundance of young of the year crabs on the Atlantic coast, and adults on the Gulf coast, were lower in 2008 than any other year on record since 1997. Another thing shown by the data is that the external signs of disease have been low for the Atlantic except for a bump in 2004; however, the Gulf incidence of external disease has been high from 2005-2007. The majority of these were parasitic infestations which appeared to be hampering population recovery. To that end, Florida implemented a pathogen monitoring program and is using outreach to educate fishermen, as well as agency samplers on recognizing parasites. From each of the six regions, twice a year, they will pull disease samples in an attempt to at least get a background on this area. Funding for the sampling is coming from licensing revenue from the Blue Crab Advisory Board. The Blue Crab Effort Management Program, which was implemented in 2007, initially had no assessment of trap tag fees but, in 2008, it collected endorsement and trap tag fees. Anyone who didn't renew was permanently lost from the systems. Florida reported a 62% reduction in active licenses and an 11% decline in the total number of traps fished statewide.

Alabama – **Hermann** reported that landings in Alabama have been declining since 2007. The drought could be causing significant habitat changes and a reduction in cover/refuge for young crabs. Decreased effort has also led to decreased landings. The biggest contributor to the decline is from the crab processing sector since there has been a reduction in the available workforce. It is thought there could be as much as a 30% reduction in the total processing since Hurricane Katrina. A lot of people who used to pick the crabs got FEMA money following Hurricane Katrina and returned to their home countries. Many of the big shops have shut down completely. Alabama has been primarily a processing state and the industry has not yet recovered from that loss of workers. This has become a critical issue affecting all the states.

Mississippi- **Floyd** reported that license sales in Mississippi continue to decline. 138 commercial licenses were sold in 2009 compared to 262 commercial crabbers before Katrina. Total landings in 2008 were 450,000 lbs valued at nearly \$400,000. It looks like a slight increase in 2009 for the same period of January through October. For 2009, total landings were 482,000 lbs valued at over \$500,000. The DMR continues to distribute TEDS to crab fishermen and is working with the GCRL on the undersized exemptions for cultured bait crabs. To date, the DMR

had installed 2,004 commercial traps with TEDs. The DMR also provided 2,318 TEDs to recreational crabbers through outreach programs at the Jackson County Fair, Mullet Festival, Singing River Services, Earth Day, and Celebrate the Gulf. Mississippi has equipped 2,584 crab traps (10,334 TEDs) of the estimated 21,000 actively fished traps in MS waters to protect terrapins.

**Floyd** noted that the following proposed legislative changes died in committee: 1) the taking of sponge crabs by ordinance; 2) the regulation of undersized aquaculture crabs; 3) the requirement of restaurants to post where seafood originated; and 4) a MS seafood promotional license plate.

Louisiana – **Guillory** reported that landings in LA were up 22% from 2008 at 40.6M lbs. While they sold 3,000 licenses in 2008, only 1,352 fishermen turned in trip tickets suggesting a high percentage of latent or unused licenses. Generally, the trip ticket data shows a decreasing effort but an increasing catch/trip and catch/fisherman. **Guillory** noted that the LA Crab Task Force was continuing to pursue fishery certification through the Marine Stewardship Council. More and more vendors, such as WalMart, are trying to move in the direction of only selling certified seafood. A pre-assessment had been completed and the task force has contracted a company to provide a formal assessment for the certification. The Task Force used \$50,000 from their crab promotion account and also solicited funds from an outside source. This process is just starting and should take about a year to complete. **Guillory** will keep the subcommittee informed.

Texas – **Wagner** provided handouts to the committee. He pointed out the 2009 preliminary landing data which are around 2.8M lbs valued at \$2.4M. These numbers are up 8% and 5%, respectively, from 2009, though landings are still down from peaks in the 1980s. Commercial crab fisherman license sales declined to 212 in 2009 which is a 23% reduction from 2000.

In December of 2009, round #10 of the license buyback program was completed. Ten applications were received and four of the ten licenses were bought back at a total price of \$37,200. The bids that were paid to the fishermen ranged from \$8,000 to \$10,000 with an average of \$9,300. The average price paid for the buybacks is increasing every year. **Wagner** stated that \$125 from each commercial crab license, as well as \$3 from each saltwater fishing stamp, goes to the buyback program. In addition, **Wagner** pointed out that they do receive occasional donations from outside groups and individuals.

There were no regulatory changes for the blue crab fishery proposed for the upcoming year. Biologists and managers are going to meet in July 2010 to discuss possible changes for 2011.

There was pretty severe drought state-wide from about 2008 to mid-2009. Since the drought broke in mid-September of 2009, it will be interesting to see if the fishery-independent and fishery-dependent catch rates of blue crabs improve.

### **Other Business**

**VanderKooy** handed out a draft of a derelict trap article he has written for the GSMFC's *Compact News* and requested current information from each state to complete the trap removal table through 2010. **VanderKooy** also needs 1999, 2000, and 2001 trap removal data from

Mississippi. Perry indicated that she has the information and will get that to VanderKooy. Any suggestions for this article are to be made to VanderKooy ASAP.

**Adjourn**

*Floyd moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Perry. With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.*

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**FISHERIES OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Tuesday, March 9, 2010  
Orange Beach, Alabama**

**James Ballard** (facilitator) called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following members and others were present:

**Members**

Richard Abrams, FL. FWC, Tallahassee, FL  
Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Lauren Thompson, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Mandy Tumlin, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Tonya Wiley, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Charlene Ponce, GMFMC, Tampa, FL  
Dan Ellinor, FL. FWC, Tallahassee, FL  
David Rainer, AL. DCNR, Silverhill, AL

**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  
Dave Donaldson, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Nancy Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Joey Shepard, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Chuck Adams, FL. Sea Grant, Gainesville, FL  
Logan Respass, TX. Sea Grant, College Station, TX  
Dave Burrage, MS-AL Sea Grant, Biloxi, MS  
Glenn Thomas, LA. Sea Grant, Baton Rouge, LA  
Tom Stevens, Univ. of FL, Gainesville, FL

**Adoption of Agenda**

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

**\*As a result of a technical malfunction this meeting was not recorded.**

## Overview of State Outreach Activities:

### Florida: R. Abrams/D. Ellinor

**R. Abrams** presented the following report about FL. FWC's Outreach and Education Subsection. The Division's Outreach and Education subsection, with a program staff of nine FTEs, conducts a variety of aquatic resource education activities and angler outreach programs statewide. All of these activities emphasize personal responsibility for the conservation of marine fisheries and other natural resources, habitat conservation, and proper (ethical) angling techniques when fishing. Funding for these programs comes primarily from Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program grants with saltwater license fee revenues serving as the required state match to the federal grants.

### Kids' Fishing Clinics

The Kids' Fishing Clinic program began in 1996. The program targets children ages 4-16 and is designed to promote responsible marine resource stewardship by teaching children the vulnerability of Florida's fragile marine ecosystems and fisheries resources, fundamental saltwater fishing skills and provide children with a positive fishing experience. At these one-day educational events, children participate in five mandatory educational stations including Knot Tying, Casting, Fishing Tackle Selection, The Good Angler and the Marine Touch Tank. After approximately one hour of instruction, the children receive a free rod and reel (compliments of local sponsors) and, at most clinics, have the opportunity to fish using their new rod and reel. Because the clinics are a catch and release event, the participants receive a photograph of themselves with their catch as a memento of the day. Kids' Fishing Clinics are conducted in coastal cities statewide with sponsorship by local governments, civic organizations, businesses and individuals. These groups also provide the necessary volunteer "workforce" to staff the educational stations and other aspects of the clinics. Since 1996, more than 46,000 children have participated in the Kids' Fishing Clinics and an estimated 31,000 parents or guardians have accompanied their children through the clinics.

### Headboat Kids Fishing Clinics

The goal of this program is to partner with headboats, large recreational fishing vessels, to provide an educational fishing experience for school groups. The captain and crew complete a training session to insure their knowledge of the FWC conservation messages and ethical angling practices and are given materials similar to the educational stations for the Kids' Fishing Clinics. School groups complete the educational stations taught by the captain and crew either at the dock or aboard the vessel as it travels to the near shore fishing spot. The educational components include catch and release techniques, the importance of marine habitats, information about saltwater recreational fishing regulations, ways to prevent pollution, knot tying, casting and general safety while fishing. After completing the stations the students fish from the headboat and use the skills and knowledge they learned in the educational part of the program. All of the fish are released by the students during this program. The initial location for this program is in the Miami area with the Reward Fishing Fleet (Captain Wayne Conn) who on a yearly basis has over 2,000 students participate in this program. Captain Wayne Conn works with a variety of groups and organizations to target inner city youth and underprivileged youth for this program. In addition to the crew, local Florida Sea Grant, Florida 4-H and International Game Fish

Association staff assist with conducting these programs in Miami. The program will expand to other coastal areas in Florida.

#### Aquatic Resource Education Activities at the FWC Hatchery (Stock Enhancement Research Facility)

School groups are given tours of the FWC hatchery in Port Manatee throughout the year. Students are given the opportunity to learn about marine fisheries, fisheries stock enhancement and marine aquaculture. Students are given a presentation and then a tour of the facility, which includes visiting a broodstock room and egg incubators, viewing Grand Slam fish, viewing plankton under microscopes, feeding fingerlings in ponds and viewing a necropsy in the fish health lab.

During school group tours, kids are often given the opportunity to fish in a manmade detention pond that has become a special opportunity fishing pond. Rods, reels and bait are provided for these events. Other organizations and groups (i.e., fishing clubs, sheriff's department, Make a Difference Foundation) also coordinate fishing events, usually for special needs children or juveniles in detention facilities, in partnership with outreach staff. About 12 of these fishing events are held each year at the hatchery.

Boys from the Manatee County Sheriffs Youth Ranch are given the opportunity to gain community service hours by volunteering at the hatchery with teachers present. They are given an educational tour of the hatchery facility upon arrival, and then help FWC staff clean the fish ponds, feed fish, and assist in hatchery maintenance and construction projects. At the end of their work period, a well-earned kids' fishing event is held to teach them basic ethical angling skills, catch and release techniques and the rules and regulations of those species caught.

#### Kids' Fishing Activity Box

The Kids' Fishing Activity Box is designed to provide anyone interested in teaching children about fisheries conservation and fishing the ability to hold an educational fishing day, similar to the FWC run Kid's Fishing Clinics. It is used by various groups ranging from Boy Scout Troops to classroom teachers. These programs are tracked via sign in sheets and the data retained for tracking the program. The box itself includes all the curricula and most of the objects needed to run a number of educational stations. These stations include: Fish Anatomy (both external and internal), Fish Adaptations (external morphology), Casting (the proper way of casting with an emphasis on safety), Good Angler (this station is a requirement of using the Kids' Fishing Activity Box and goes over fisheries conservation practices), Habitat Match (teaches which kinds of animals you would find in which habitats and why habitat is important), and Knot Tying (the proper ways of tying a uni- and clinch knot).

There are a number of supplementary materials found in the box as well. The Kids' Fishing Activity boxes are shipped to groups/teachers when they are requested and returned when the group is finished using it. A box may be utilized for several days or weeks in one location by a variety of groups or teachers in that area. Future plans for this program include several regional locations where several activity boxes can be stored and picked up by people in that region.



### Nature Coast Fishing for Youth

This program is conducted at the Senator George Kirkpatrick Marine Lab in Cedar Key. The program is an inshore fishing clinic for children during the summer. This one day program is offered throughout the summer and is open to youth between the ages of 6 and 16. Organizations and individuals make reservations to participate in this free FWC program. Participants learn: fish identification, fisheries conservation techniques, knot tying, casting, bait types, the importance of habitat, gear care, and more. The day ends with pier fishing with all participants practicing catch-and-release fishing. Rods, reels and tackle boxes for participants are provided by Fish Florida. Parents are encouraged to participate in the program along with their children. Reservations are required for most programs and space is limited to 24 children. The program begins at 9 am and ends at 2 pm. Programs occur during June and July each year.

### Make-A-Difference Fishing Foundation Special Opportunity Fishing Events

Marine fisheries outreach and FWC hatchery staff work with this non-profit organization to provide fishing opportunities for kids with physical and mental disabilities. Make a Difference and Coastal Conservation Association volunteers built a Handicapped Fishing Dock at the FWC hatchery in Port Manatee so kids in wheelchairs can fish off the dock like any other child. All materials and labor were donated. These handicapped fishing events are conducted every third Saturday of the month or whenever a group can participate in the event.

### Touch Tank Events

Upon request, and if marine fisheries outreach staff and equipment are available, staff provides educational interactive displays including publications and touch tanks at marine resource oriented special events throughout the state. The goal of the marine touch tank is to illustrate the importance of habitat to marine fish and how people can protect these fragile environments. Showing participants live marine animals sparks their interest and provides an opportunity for staff to talk about the animal, the vital relationship between habitat and marine life and ways that all of us can limit the destruction of marine habitats. Touch tanks are offered at events such as the Make-a-Difference Fishing Foundation fishing event, RiverFest, and the Pediatric Cancer Foundation kids' event.

### "Aquaculture in the Classroom" program

FWC Stock Enhancement Research Facility outreach staff coordinates with schools from around Florida to provide red drum fingerlings for marine science and aquaculture programs in their classroom. Teachers receive hatchery raised red drum on loan for educational purposes, to help raise fish in classroom and help maintain and develop curriculum and scientific experiments for students. The students are able to help maintain the fish while learning about the benefits of hatcheries as a potential tool for fisheries management. Once the fish reach a certain age/size they are returned to the FWC Stock Enhancement Research Facility.

### Teacher/Student Field Activities

This program promotes the mission of the FWC - "Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people" - to teachers and their students. The program demonstrates scientific techniques used by state biologists to collect and analyze data to obtain information necessary for fisheries management decisions and illustrates that everyone has a responsible role in the management and conservation of Florida's valuable natural resources.

The program targets high school teachers and students, but several middle school teachers and students have completed the activities. The field activities cover several topics including: water chemistry, plankton, seining, field observations, basic data manipulation, species identification, habitat/organism relationships, basic fisheries concepts, saltwater fishing conservation techniques and basic ecosystem management. The teachers complete a week long workshop that enables the teachers to complete all of the field and lab activities.

Upon completing the workshop the teachers have the opportunity to bring groups of student to the facility for 2-6 days to complete the marine field activities. They also receive 40 in-service credit hours for this workshop.

After completing these activities, the students have a better understanding of how and why data is collected, how managers utilize this data to provide resource management options, why they make regulations, and are better informed to help make management decisions. A teacher and student manual provide all of the activities, procedures, goals, discussion questions and Sunshine State Standards. Safety information, habitat descriptions, FWC concepts and natural history information are also provided in the manuals. The original site for this program is Pigeon Key in the Florida Keys. Program staff is currently working with the Crystal River Marine Science Station to expand this program into the Big Bend region of Florida.

FWC outreach staff work with the host educational facility to provide the necessary field equipment, laboratory equipment, manuals, literature, fishing equipment, and all forms necessary to run these activities.

#### Florida Sportsman Fishing Shows

Staff attends all of these eight events annually. The display at these events consists of a 500 gallon Grand Slam Tank (with a legal sized Redfish, Snook and Spotted Sea Trout); a 20 foot display (featuring both Freshwater and Saltwater Programs along with Hunting and Law Enforcement) and various tables with fishing and hunting literature and information. Staff answers questions, hand out fisheries information, distribute saltwater fish identification posters, provide hands-on demonstrations of fisheries conservation techniques, promote the Sport Fish Restoration Program and receive feedback from stakeholders on Florida's fisheries. These events draw several thousand anglers each day. Staff also participates in other fishing shows statewide, such as the Florida Fishing College event, to promote fisheries conservation and disseminate fisheries information. One of these events is Tampa Tribune's Outdoor Expo which gathers 20,000 anglers annually.

#### Fisheries Conservation Presentations

Outreach staff coordinates with fishing clubs, tournaments (particularly the captain's meeting) and other groups to provide a presentation covering various fisheries related topics. The main topics are catch and release techniques, the Sport Fish Restoration Program and the importance of habitat to Florida's fish species but staff has giving presentations on saltwater fish identification, life history of various saltwater fish, overview of the Division of Marine Fisheries Management and the Outreach and Education programs. Staff brings fisheries related literature to distribute (regulations, fish ID books and posters, Catch and Release brochures, etc.) and a variety of other free items including: tape measures and circle hooks. Staff utilize these

presentations to disseminate fisheries conservation information and also gather information from anglers about what they see happening in the fisheries and their opinions on fisheries topics.

#### Women's Fishing Events

Staff works with members of the "Ladies Let's Go Fishing!™" organization to provide a two-day fishing event for women in Florida. These events emphasize fisheries conservation, ethical angling practices and basic through intermediate fishing skills. The participants interact with FWC staff and saltwater anglers to learn these principles. The first day begins with a presentation from FWC staff covering how the agency manages fisheries in Florida, how they (FWC) promotes fisheries conservation and what anglers can do to protect fisheries and how they can participate in the management of Florida's marine resources. Following this presentation are talks about basic fishing information, different types of fishing methods and specific techniques for that area of Florida. The afternoon hosts skill stations at which the women learn about catch and release techniques, bait rigging, knot tying, trailer backing, boat docking, electronics for fishing, casting and cast netting. The next day allows the women to go fishing on a variety of fishing boats to utilize their newly learned skills and catch fish.

Four of these events are held annually in Florida usually in different locations each year. FWC outreach staff are also developing a one-day event similar to this program that will be held in smaller coastal cities statewide. The event will have presentations, skill stations, will be a free event and the participants will fish from shore. The initial location for these events will be Crystal River.

#### Apalachee Bay Resource Outreach Program

This program targets saltwater anglers (primarily) to disseminate fisheries information prior to fishing trips. Staff work with regional tackle shops and boating access facilities to set up a table with saltwater fish identification books, regulations, catch and release brochures and boating and angling guides to distribute to anglers. Staff also hand out tape measures and circle hooks and demonstrate various catch and release techniques that anglers can use to promote fisheries conservation while they are fishing. This non-regulatory approach to interacting with anglers in the field is also a vehicle for staff to receive information from anglers about their opinions of the fisheries and what they see while they are interacting with the resource. These activities generally occur during peak fishing times (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) from the Aucilla River through the Apalachicola River in the Panhandle of Florida. This program is expanding to the Big Bend region of Florida.

#### The FISH (Fish, Invertebrates and Saltwater Habitats) Trailer Program

This mobile exhibit features four habitat tanks (coral reef; beaches and sand dunes; mangroves, seagrasses and oyster bars; salt marshes) along with a touch tank to illustrate and discuss the importance of Florida's marine habitat and how they benefit coastal fisheries. The tanks have fish and invertebrates that are found in that specific habitat. The displays discuss marine fisheries management concepts and promote marine resource stewardship principles while promoting the Sport Fish Restoration Program. Staff work with various organizations to maintain this exhibit for at a minimum 3 weeks in one location. The primary organization that this program will target is Florida's State Parks to partner and promote both habitat and fisheries conservation

throughout Florida. The FISH Trailer is also utilized at the Florida State Fair in association with the FWC's agency displays.

**D. Ellinor** covered Florida's commercial outreach activities. As the only commercial outreach employee with FL. FWC, his main goal is to keep the commercial fishing industry updated on any regulatory changes. He stated that one way he does this is by producing 3 newsletters per year that outline any changes or updates in the industry. He also publishes a regulations booklet once a year that outlines all the commercial regulations for Florida. They make all these materials available to the industry in both English and Spanish. He also stated that he served on an advisory panel and holds workshops to help inform the commercial sector as well as hear all of their concerns. Once a month he dose "house calls" where he goes out with a crabber or visits a fish house or some other member of the commercial sector to help establish a level of trust with the industry.

### **Alabama: D. Rainer**

**D. Rainer** talked about Alabama's efforts to get kids interested in fishing including their kids' art work calendars and their marine fish coloring books. He also explained about their efforts to introduce inner city kids to fishing through education programs. He discussed and passed around copies of their marine information calendars that contain a lot of information for fishermen including tides, boating access locations and fish creel limit. Alabama's Marine Resources Division (MRD) participated in outreach events at the Alabama Coastal Bird Festival and Conservation Expo in Fairhope and the Mobile Boat Show. These events included MRD's interactive "touch tanks". David pointed out that his main job is the outdoor writer for Outdoor Alabama magazine that is published five times a year by the Alabama Department of Conservation. This magazine provides the public with a lot of useful information about how to use Alabama's natural resources responsibly.

### **Mississippi: T. Floyd and L. Thompson**

**T. Floyd** and **L. Thompson** covered some of the partnerships they have developed with other agencies in the region to carry out outreach activities including Sea Grant, MSU, USM, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and GSMFC. The Department of Marine Recourses' Shrimp and Crab Bureau distributed shirts to all MS. shrimp license purchasers advertising their Shrimp Hotline (1-866-We Trawl), this toll free 24 hour service provides up-to-date information to the shrimping industry. The Bureau also produces a "Shrimping the Sound Newsletter to help keep the industry up-to-date with regulations, and any changes that may occur. They covered their live bait shrimp outreach program in which they Inspected and licensed 17 camps, 18 vessels and 11 transport vehicles. Some of the inspection requirements included; facilities must be able to safely serve the public, tanks must have adequate water flow for optimal survival of shrimp, and catcher vessels cannot have larger then a 16' trawl and 4' doors and must have a covered tank. They outlined the goals of the MS. Crab Task Force and some of the efforts they are taking to achieve them. One of the problems this Task Force is dealing with is derelict crab traps and in response they have run an award-winning removal program for several years that has removed 18,270 derelict traps to date. Traci also pointed out that this group is working to reduce the bycatch in the fishery and to decrease the concerns about diamondback terrapin by providing the

industry with BRDs and TEDs. They also covered their recreational fishing outreach event "Casting for conservation". This event has a catch and release fishing tournament for kids 6-13 years old where every kid that participates receives a rod and reel. This event also has stations to teach about conservation, fishing, fish ID and water safety. Traci and Lauren also gave an overview of their Monofilament Recycling Program and pointed out that 46.8% of all entanglement deaths are caused by monofilament fishing line. With the help of several partners MS. Has been able to put out 42 recycling stations across the coast and has recycled 177 lbs. of monofilament to date. Mississippi held its 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Coastal Cleanup, which resulted in 3,205 volunteers removing 46,873 lbs. of debris from 190 miles of shore line. They then passed around samples of some of their outreach materials, including their marine information calendars that contain a lot of information for fishermen including tides, artificial reef locations and fish creel limit.

### **Louisiana: M. Tumlin**

**M. Tumlin** presented on the Louisiana Cooperative Marine Sport Fish Tagging Program that was started in 2004. This program to date has over 450 participating anglers and has tagged over 6,000 fish. Mandy mentioned the Louisiana Saltwater Series and the efforts of LDWF at these tournament events to reach out to the fishing public. She discussed the derelict crab trap removal program and pointed out how they removed 469 traps in one day in February of this year. She outlined some of LDWF's education programs that are geared toward getting kids involved with marine fishing and teaching them about ways to conserve the marine environment and about different types of marine animals. Mandy pointed out that for a lot of their outreach talks to kids they utilize their law enforcement staff and have found that the kids pay attention better. They are working on developing a fishing line recycling program similar to the ones being carried out in other states in the Gulf and a clear, concise and universal message to teach the angling public about proper fish handling. They are also planning on putting together outreach materials to be used at the Bass masters' classic that will be held in LA for the next two years. They will also be developing a permanent outreach exhibit that will be located at the Aquarium of the Americas.

### **Texas: T. Wiley**

**T. Wiley** gave a presentation in which she talked about their public scoping and hearings that they carry out to keep the fishing public informed of any regulation changes or management decisions that are made and to hear and address any concerns the public may have. In the summer of 2009 they launched a tarpon observation network which is a volunteer, web-based program to report tarpon sightings along the Texas coast. Tonya pointed out that more information on this program is available on the TPWD website. She also covered Texas' very successful abandoned crab trap removal program that has removed over 27,500 traps since its start in 2002. She discussed their Certified Conservation Guide Program that they are in the process of creating and the online curriculum for fishing guide certification that will be part of the new program. Tonya stated that Texas is involved in a number of other outreach activities for instance, they put on fishing Expos, give talks to schools and other groups, they produce articles for fishing magazines and they serve on numerous special panels. She outlined some of the outreach materials that are produced by TPWD's communications division, including those geared toward getting kids interested in the outdoors and fishing and ones that educate the public

about ways they can help conserve the natural environment. She stated that Texas is using a variety of social media sites to help with their outreach efforts and has had good success with some of them, especially YouTube which they use to distribute their new outreach videos.

#### **Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council: C. Ponce**

**C. Ponce** gave an overview of the Gulf Councils activities including their Online and Web Based Initiatives like the online coverage of the Council's meetings and the redesigning of their website to make it more user friendly and to highlight the most viewed content. She also covered their video messaging and other technology including a dynamic display, short video messages, a Smartphone application that they are using for outreach. She stated that they are using a number of social media sources to help get fisheries management information out to the public and they also utilize direct mail to send out newsletters, press releases, Gulf Council fliers and fact sheets/summaries of emerging issues. They are also trying to get an Education program for the southeast region based on the model used in the northeast. They will find out at the end of March if this program is funded or not. She pointed out that they will be developing a five-year strategic plan for their outreach program and alternative formats for their public meetings to make them more productive. She also stated that they are hiring a fisheries outreach specialist.

#### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 4: J. Fleming**

**J. Fleming** called in to discuss some of the activities of the US Fish and Wildlife Service in region 4. He said their effort now is to move to web based outreach and they are embracing social media sources. They have hired a new young employee to handle this new web based project. They are continuing to work on everglades restoration outreach work. They have also been working on developing the Gulf Coastal Plains and Ozarks, the South Atlantic, and the Peninsular Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, which focus on on-the-ground strategic conservation efforts at the landscape level. Jeff pointed out that they have been doing cooperative communication work with the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership as well as, developing a mobile platform for some of their outreach material.

#### **Overview of Sea Grant's Outreach Activities: C. Adams**

**C. Adams** provided the subcommittee with the following report that covers a variety of outreach projects that Sea Grant is carrying out across the Gulf coast region. He wanted the subcommittee to know that there is a potential for coordination with Sea Grant on outreach projects.

### **A Selection of Gulf Of Mexico Sea Grant Fisheries Extension Program Efforts**

#### **Texas Sea Grant**

##### **Report Reveals Hurricane Ike Related Damage to the Oyster Industry & Ecosystem**

Soon after Hurricane Ike made landfall requests were made for accurate damage assessments of the heavily impacted Galveston Bay oyster fishery and its reef ecosystems. Three weeks after landfall, faculty with the Texas A&M System began assessing damages to the assets controlled by oyster-dependent firms across the Galveston Bay system (GBS). Operators quickly committed to this effort. Damage estimates are based on 62% of all firms and 74% of leased acreage so an

accurate portrayal has been created. The completed damage estimate reports provided an accurate portrayal of the work required for industry to regain its "pre-Ike" footing. In addition, the report addresses the importance of the GBS to the U.S. eastern oyster industry, outlines the numerous environmental benefits oyster reefs contribute to this multiple-use estuary, reports on the damage across the oyster-dependent industry, and recommend various steps to restore the benefits a thriving reef complex provides to estuarine ecosystems. The full report can be found at <http://texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu>.

#### Fuel Saving Shrimp Trawl Technology Transferred

For gulf shrimp trawlers, fuel costs are a major operating expense. Reducing operating expenses through reductions in fuel consumption will improve vessel profitability, thus buoying an industry struggling to compete with imports and high fuel prices. Efforts to evaluate and adapt new, fuel-conserving, trawl gear and get them adopted by the gulf shrimp fleet through technology transfer are ongoing. To date evaluations of new types of net webbing and trawl doors has resulted in 24 percent fuel savings on average. Efforts continue to export this technology beyond Texas to the rest of the Gulf and South Atlantic shrimp fishery. As a direct result of these outreach educational efforts, one shrimp fleet owner upon noticing how much fuel he burning compared to our cooperators fleet, has agreed to work the new Sustainable Fisheries loan program to acquire the trawl gear at 50% of the cost. These direct observations of our fuel saving result demonstration projects showcases technology transfer into Bon Secour, Alabama.

#### By-catch Reduction Shrimp Trawl Technology Transferred

Sea Grant personnel have transferred new by-catch reduction device (BRD) designs and technology to meet the new National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) requirements for finfish exclusion without the subsequent loss of shrimp. During the reporting period, 15 cooperating vessels were rigged with the new Modified Jones-Davis BRD, including boats in Galveston, Freeport and Bolivar areas. Cooperators in Bon Secour, AL also evaluated the newly mandated BRDs. After testing and evaluations were concluded, many shrimp fishermen opted for the new Modified Jones-Davis BRD over the traditional fish-eye. The NMFS branch in Pascagoula has endorsed Sea Grant's efforts on BRD work and research findings.

#### Sustainable Seafood Partnership Efforts Result in Contract

The Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) was formed in order to bring together fishermen, seafood buyers, and other fishery experts to explore new and innovative ways to move this valuable and important fishery towards sustainability. Texas Sea Grant faculty have been working with industry and national conservation group representatives in order to ensure wild-caught shrimp producers receive MSC labeling. In August, a shrimp processor from Freeport, Texas, signed an agreement with "Clean Fish" (<http://www.cleanfish.com/>) to begin marketing their product. This pilot project offers the opportunity of expanded markets and higher dock-side prices.

### **Louisiana Sea Grant**

#### Fishing Gear Modernization Program

A grant funded program is under development to provide funds for pre-determined types of fishing and refrigeration equipment used by commercial fishers to allow the industry to modernize in order to compete in highly competitive global markets. The program will benefit

fisheries by either (a) providing gear that lowers production costs by increasing efficiency; (b) increasing the quality of what is caught and brought on board thereby increasing market price for products, and/or (c) reducing environmental impact or carbon footprint. Also under development is a uniform market standard for Premium Grade Louisiana White and Brown Shrimp.

#### Catch Share Questions

Given the recent attention to the use of catch shares in rebuilding fisheries, Louisiana Sea Grant has developed information on this type of fishery management, for distribution by several print and electronic formats (including an interactive web forum). This effort is intended to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, with the goal of facilitating the progression of well-informed discussions.

#### Direct Seafood Marketing

Louisiana Sea Grant is working with the Twin Parish Port Commission of Delcambre to launch a direct marketing seafood program, as a focused effort to revitalize the local fishing industry in Iberia and Vermilion parishes and the Port of Delcambre. The project is designed to put seafood consumers directly in touch with local producers of wild caught shrimp, crabs, finfish, and other seafood products. Direct sales of seafood will allow opportunities for new markets and better prices to the fishermen as well as more high quality fresh seafood products for the consumer. Research shows that tremendous direct marketing opportunities exist in the Acadiana region which includes Lafayette, New Iberia, Abbeville, and nearby communities. This direct marketing program will include extensive professional marketing efforts by the Port Commission. A state of the art internet web site is being developed to showcase local producers and products. The website will allow consumers to make direct personal contact with individual producers to place orders for seafood. The Port of Delcambre is also developing waterfront locations for fishermen to dock and sell their products.

#### **Mississippi/Alabama Sea Grant**

##### Electronic Logbook Program Enhancement for the Northern Gulf shrimp Fleet

In collaboration with LGL Ecological Research Associates, efforts were undertaken to expand the Gulf-wide use of electronic logbook technology by the offshore shrimp fleet. The overall goal is to develop direct measures of fishing effort that could replace modeled estimates of effort that had historically been used by the regulatory agencies to monitor red snapper by-catch in the shrimping industry. We improved the data available to fisheries managers on the fishing effort of the Northern Gulf Shrimp Fleet by recruiting 74 shrimp vessels in Mississippi and Alabama to participate in electronic logbook program. Sea Grant outreach specialists install and maintain the devices and arrange to meet the vessels to retrieve data when they come to port to unload.

##### Sea Grant Reduces Operating Costs for Mississippi and Alabama Shrimpers

Research and technology transfer regarding the use of Sapphire™ trawl webbing has shown that shrimpers can reduce fuel consumption between one and two gallons per hour by switching to the new webbing. This work was done in collaboration with the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc. and Texas Sea Grant. In 2009, eleven boats adopted the practice leading to conservative estimates of over \$75 per day savings per boat. As diesel fuel prices increase, the savings increase proportionately.



### Oyster Gardening in Mobile Bay

Through Sea Grant's continued involvement in the Oyster Gardening Program in Mobile Bay, gardeners increased production of restoration oysters by 70 percent in 2008. Thirty-four gardeners each grew 1,700 oysters for planting on restoration reefs, for a total of 59,000 oysters. In 2009, volunteers grew about 44,000 oysters at 44 gardening sites. Production dropped somewhat in 2009 due to the effects of Hurricane Ida. Volunteers maintain juvenile oysters (spat) in submerged cages by cleaning the cages about once a week during the summer months and removing any predators, such as blue crabs and oyster drills, from the cage. The new Adopt-A-Garden Program allows people who do not own waterfront property to participate in oyster gardening. For \$25 a year, participants will receive a monthly newsletter and be able to follow their oysters as they grow. Proceeds support science research programs in area schools. The oyster gardening program is sponsored by Mobile Bay National Estuary Program in cooperation with Auburn University and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium. It teaches students and adults about the ecological and economical roles oysters play in Mobile Bay.

### **Florida Sea Grant**

#### 2010 Florida Artificial Reef Summit

Florida Sea Grant and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission collaborated to host the 2010 Florida Artificial Reef Summit in January in Cocoa Beach, Florida. Over 180 participants representing local, state, and federal government agencies, not-for-profit organizations, private businesses, academia, and private citizen groups attended the three-day event. The Summit included 40 invited and contributed presentations, 24 poster presentations, and 24 sponsors. Sessions addressed fisheries management applications, adaptive management strategies, state and local reef program updates, regulatory and permitting updates, Ships to Reefs program overview, and citizen involvement and monitoring programs. 89% of returned surveys indicated they agreed or strongly agreed the Summit improved their knowledge and understanding of current artificial reef issues in the state and 91% agreed or strongly agreed that they plan to apply what they learned at the summit to their artificial reef-related work. A six-month follow up survey is planned to document the extent to which participants have utilized Summit resources.

#### Engaging Recreational Hispanic Fishermen in Southwest Florida

Hispanics represent a growing percentage of the coastal population in Southwest Florida, and they have not always been reached by traditional extension outreach and education efforts. Florida Sea Grant faculty in collaboration with University of Florida researchers recently conducted a series of focus groups in Ft. Myers and Naples to better understand the educational needs of Hispanic recreational fishermen. The focus groups were conducted in Spanish and the anglers, who all had been in Florida ten years or less, were recruited using local networks. Discussions centered around the Hispanic community's general fishing practices, knowledge of and compliance with fishing regulations, sources of fishing information, and strategies to extend outreach opportunities to this segment of the population. Several consistent themes emerged from the meetings including a general lack of understanding about state fishing regulations and where to access this information, confusion about who needs a fishing license and consequences of not having one, and a strong interest in receiving more fishing-related information especially through bilingual publications and formal trainings. Currently, agents are collaborating with

partners such as the local school system to develop future outreach programs that meet the identified needs of this traditionally underserved audience.

### Sustainable Fishing Methods

Florida Sea Grant has maintained a continued effort to create awareness among recreational anglers of the benefits of utilizing release techniques that help to reduce release mortality. Of particular interest has been educational programs conducted on the use of 1) venting tools for reef fish releases, 2) circle hooks, 3) boat-side release tools, and 4) general catch and release practices. Numerous workshops/presentations have been conducted, and a variety of educational materials developed. The programs coincided with the recent passage of federal law concerning the use of sustainable fishing methods for reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico. The effort received financial support from UF IFAS, as well as ongoing support from Florida Sea Grant Fisheries Extension Enhancement funds. A website is currently available that provides a wide variety of information regarding the use of sustainable fishing methods (<http://catchandrelease.org>.)

### Mislabeling of Grouper Products in Florida Markets

One of the most contentious issues in the Gulf-region seafood market is the rampant mislabeling of cheaper finfish products as “grouper”. The widespread occurrence of this form of economic fraud prompted the state of Florida to launch a statewide “sting” operation, which received massive media coverage. This issue led regional commercial fisheries groups to ask for assistance in developing a product integrity program regarding species identification and product source. The Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation funded an effort to 1) determine the level of awareness of the problem within the general public, 2) to what extent the problem has changed the household’s seafood consumption patterns, 3) identify the features of an integrity program that would alleviate concerns product ID and source, and 4) assess consumer’s willingness to pay for such a program. A telephone survey, developed in conjunction with an industry steering committee, was conducted with 400 Florida households. The findings suggest a general awareness of the problem within Florida, which has changed consumption patterns, and has created a willingness to pay for a greater level of assurance with regard to grouper purchases both at-home and in the restaurant setting.

Questions regarding the above programs or other topics currently being addressed by the respective Sea Grant Extension Programs can be directed to:

Logan Respass (Texas Sea Grant): [l-respass@tamu.edu](mailto:l-respass@tamu.edu)

Glen Thomas (Louisiana Sea Grant): [GThomas@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:GThomas@agcenter.lsu.edu)

Dave Burrage (Mississippi /Alabama Sea Grant): [daveb@ext.msstate.edu](mailto:daveb@ext.msstate.edu)

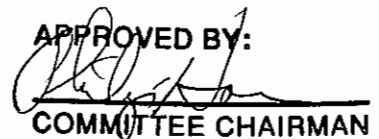
Chuck Adams (Florida Sea Grant): [cmadams@ufl.edu](mailto:cmadams@ufl.edu)

### Discussion on the Future Direction of This Subcommittee

Overall the Subcommittee felt that this meeting was beneficial and they would like to continue with this cooperative effort. It was decided that the Subcommittee would hold another meeting at the Commission’s fall 2010 meeting in Clearwater, Florida. The focus of this next meeting will be to look at some of the outreach projects that all of our member states have in common, and work on ways to unify them so every state is presenting very similar clear and concise outreach messages. Also, the Subcommittee will look into the possibility of developing a

localized database to share the electronic form of their outreach materials so a state that wants to develop something similar can just modify an established one as opposed to starting from scratch.

***With no further business to discuss; J. Ballard adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.***

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**COMMERCIAL/RECREATIONAL FISHERIES ADVISORY PANEL  
MINUTES – 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Tuesday, March 9, 2010  
Orange Beach, Alabama**

**Horn** called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. with a quorum for the Joint panel and the commercial panel only. The recreational panel currently has two vacancies (AL and FL) and the MS and LA members were unable to attend this meeting so there was no quorum for their sector. Those in attendance were as follows:

**Members**

Philip Horn, Clark Seafood, Pascagoula, MS  
John Rawlings, Colorado River Seafood, Matagorda, TX  
Bob Zales II, Panama City, FL  
Ronnie Luster, Texas CCA, Houston, TX  
Pete Barber, Alabama Seafood Association, Coden, AL  
Daniel Babin, Gulf Fish Inc., Houma, LA

**Others**

Preston Pate, MRIP Program, Newport, NC  
Harlon Pearce, GMFMC Member, New Orleans, LA  
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Tony Reisinger, TX Sea Grant, San Benito, TX  
Judy Jamison, G&SAFF, Tampa, FL  
Dave McKinney, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX  
Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
John Froeschke, GMFMC Staff, St. Petersburg, FL

**Staff**

Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
David Donaldson, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, MRFSS Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ralph Hode, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Jeff Rester, Habitat Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
James Ballard, Sport Fish Restoration 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.

**Adoption of Agenda**

Without objection, the agenda was accepted as written.

### **Approval of Minutes (October 12, 2009 – Biloxi, MS)**

The panel reviewed the minutes from the Biloxi meeting. Without objection, the minutes were accepted as written.

### **FDA Actions Regarding Potential Gulf Oyster Summer Ban**

**Dale Diaz** (MDMR) presented an overview of the oyster issue, providing some of the background into the ISSC and the concern of the FDA's current course of action. Diaz provided a very basic overview of vibrios which occur naturally in warm, coastal areas, such as the Gulf of Mexico year-round although it is found in higher concentrations from April through October. It can affect any individual that consumes it but results in Septicemia which can be fatal in individuals with diabetes, cirrhosis, leukemia or that are taking immunosuppressive drugs or steroids. Those 'At-Risk' individuals shouldn't consume any raw meats, fish, or shellfish.

In an effort to reduce the risk of vibrio infection for all consumers, a number of Post Harvest Process or PHPs have been approved by the FDA; 1) high hydrostatic pressure, 2) heat cool pasteurization, 3) individually quick frozen, and 4) low dose gamma irradiation.

The ISSC, FDA, and states developed a *Vibrio vulnificus* Risk Management Plan in 1999 that would impact any states with 2 or more Vv cases in a year. The plan required that there must be a reduction of Vv cases from the "core" states or those with more than 2 cases/year (FL, LA, GA, SC, AL, CA, TX) and set goals for reduction at 40% by 2005 and 60% by 2007. In 2007 there were 19 cases reported in the Gulf which was only a 24.8% reduction from baseline. Therefore, the reduction goal was not met. In the reduction plan, there were several options offered to achieve the goal which included:

- labeling
- additional HACCP sanitation
- additional harvesting rules and regulations
- temperature controls
- education and public outreach
- harvest innovations and adaptation of new technologies
- use of PHP technologies.

Last fall, the FDA provided a letter to the ISSC at the last minute stating that they intended to implement mandatory PHP for all oysters harvested during the summer months and would do this outside of the long-standing ISSC framework. In 2009, the ISSC had approved changes to the tome/temperature requirements to further reduce Vv risk but the FDA has now superseded that decision. Shortly after the FDA's stated intentions, a number of state representatives, governors, and industry representatives flooded the FDA with letters and concerns, so they agreed to temporarily table any action until they could look at the feasibility of implementing PHPs or other equivalent controls by the summer of 2011. It is still undetermined what the final outcome will be. In the meantime, Sea Grant is working on the mandatory PHP impact assessment on the processors and consumers and will coordinate their study with the ISSC and the industry. Alex Miller, GSMFC Staff Economist, is helping with the study.

### Winter 2009 Fish Kills

The group spoke briefly on the recent cold snaps and reviewed the information provided by the state of Florida. There were quite a few small fish kills in all the states but Florida suffered the most significant and widespread impacts. All the states reported a few sport fish, such as spotted seatrout and redfish, but most of the impacted fish seemed to be mullet. Florida, however, had significant losses of snook, tarpon, trout and redfish, and even large goliath grouper from lower Florida and the Keys. In addition, thousands of sea turtles were distressed and required short-term care to recover for release. A number of turtles died on both coasts as well as a fairly large number of manatees.

### Recreational Amberjack Closure Date

**John Froeschke** (GMFMC) presented the most recent information on Gulf Amberjack quotas and the recreational closure. He reported that the commercial sector will continue with an in-season quota closure and that, if landings exceed quota, the quota in 2011 will be reduced by the amount necessary to recover the overage. In the recreational fishery, they are also looking at an in-season quota closure and in the event of an overage, reduce the quota to recover the overage. The commercial quota in 2009 was exceeded by 28,940 lbs and closed November 7, 2009, making the 2010 quota 439,487 lbs. The 2009 recreational quota was exceeded by 221,798 lbs, making the 2010 recreational quota around 1,110,000 lbs.

### Federal Water Red Drum Proposal

**Froeschke** also provided a short report on the movement toward having the Council and NOAA reestablish an EEZ allowance for the harvest of red drum. Froeschke discussed the history of the overfishing designation and the subsequent closure of the EEZ to the commercial and eventually recreational sectors. He noted the escapement rates currently estimated from state waters and the Council's review of those rates for any possible consideration. It was also noted that, at this time, there is an Executive Order signed by President Bush in 2007 which unilaterally directs that future fishing of redfish and striped bass in federal waters be limited to recreational fisherman. Harlan Pearce (GMFMC Member) replied that an Executive Order can't supersede a constitutionally-enacted federal law, however, so there is a possibility of it being repealed under the Magnuson Act. Finally, the red drum's EEZ population must also be considered within the framework of ecosystem management; how does the current population level affect other species such as blue crabs? At this time, there is no data on that offshore population.

*After considerable discussion, Babin made a motion to ask the GSMFC to encourage the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council to develop a management strategy that would allow a controlled harvest of red drum in the EEZ. Rawlings seconded and the motion passed although Luster was opposed.*

### MRIP Update

**Preston Pate** (NOAA) provided an overview and update on the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) and the progress being made in the pilot studies and explained how the

implementation of the program will likely take place. As background, in 2000, there were a number of redundant and overlapping data programs and the NRC did a national review that encompassed all the recreational surveys. Their findings determined that there was a better way to incorporate the existing programs under one umbrella program called MRIP. Pate reported that the program's current design has three basic phases: evaluation, innovation, and activation.

The program has completed several tasks under evaluation including the identification and consolidation of information on existing recreational datasets, evaluation of MRFSS sampling and estimation designs for effort and catch, and an expert review of methods to assess for-hire marine recreational fisheries. At this time the program is conducting an evaluation of quality assurance and quality controls in recreational fishing data collections. Under innovation, there are several pilot tests of new sampling and estimation methods such as angler registries, new estimation method for the current MRFSS sampling, new access point intercept surveys, and a logbook reporting program. There are several other projects under review or consideration for starting pilots as well. Finally, under activation, there are three goals: to apply any new survey methods, to benchmark new survey methods against old survey methods, and to meet customer (angling community) needs for precision and resolution. Several of the completed pilots are planned to be implemented starting in 2010. Pate noted that the MRIP won't "be a silver bullet" but it will ensure high quality data avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach, establish a set of national standards for data collection and analysis, and provide regional data partners extended data coverage.

### **IJF Activities**

**VanderKooy** provided an update on the two management plans currently under development as well as other IJF related activities such as derelict trap cleanups. VanderKooy reported that several sections of the oyster revision are complete at this point. Dr. Fulford (GCRL) has been continuing to work with the oyster assessment and, along with Dr. Arnold (NOAA formerly FWC), has developed a significant portion of the complete section. Dr. Eric Powell (Rutgers University) has agreed to review the section since he originally developed and published much of the background.

**VanderKooy** reported that there are several sections of the White Trout Profile that just need review at this point. Task force members are working on those sections and providing comments to the authors. It is anticipated that a final draft meeting will occur in May or June depending on the availability of FY2010 IJF funds. The recreational representative on that task force has not worked out and **VanderKooy** asked if there was anyone else interested in participating or if any panel members had any recommendations to contact him.

Finally, **VanderKooy** reported that several state-sponsored derelict trap cleanups occurred this winter using volunteers again. The Mississippi cleanup was conducted January 28-31, with around 350 traps picked up from coastal waters. The Louisiana volunteer cleanup was March 7. The Texas volunteer cleanup was February 20 and the Alabama public cleanup was Saturday, March 6. Florida is holding cleanups for derelict blue crab traps from Tampa Bay south July 10-19, the big bend area July 20-29, and the panhandle January 5-14, 2011.

### **Artificial Reef Activities and Invasive Species Program Update**

**Ballard** provided updates on the artificial reefs program and invasive species. He mentioned several of the state projects over the last few months including the reefing of the Great Wicomico by the DMR in cooperation with Omega Protein and the Gulf Fishing Banks.

**Ballard** also gave a short PowerPoint presentation on two species that were showing up in the Gulf with much more regularity, the Lionfish and Asian Tiger Prawn. **Ballard** showed the proliferation of reports for both species over the last few years and was able to show on maps how the species are spreading throughout the South Atlantic and Caribbean and now are showing up in the Gulf of Mexico. It will only be a matter of time before the lionfish are established in large numbers Gulf-wide. There was considerable discussion related to where the species may have originated and what measures might be available to restrict their spread. The lionfish are actually good to eat with some care in cleaning and the tiger prawn's size makes it a voracious competitor with the native shrimp species.

Finally, **Ballard** introduced the reformatted website for the Invasive Species Program.

### **Emergency Disaster Relief Program Update**

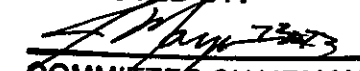
**Hode** updated the panel on the EDRP program and where the disaster funds have been spent to date. **Hode** reported that in the assistance part of the program (EDRP II), TED-BRD compliance has provided 78.8 % of the 1.9M. Under assistance to fishermen, 77.4% of the 49.8M has been distributed, 65.1% of the 27.4M has been provided as assistance to fisheries business and industry. Approximately 24.8% of the 1.8M for domestic marketing has been released while seafood testing has received 20.8% of the 3.4M which was programmed. Under EDRP I, a total of 81.1M has been spent in total on resource recovery which is 63.8% of the 127M in the total program. **Hode** noted that there are approximately 1.5 years to spend out the balance in the two programs.

### **Other Business**

*With no further business, the panel adjourned at 11:10 a.m.*



APPROVED BY:

  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES - 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Tuesday, March 9, 2010  
Orange Beach, Alabama**

Chairman **J. Mayne** called the meeting to order at 8:30 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  
Robert Goodrich, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Brett Norton, FWC, Tallahassee, FL

**Others**

Tracy Dunn, NOAA/OLE, St. Petersburg, FL  
Donald Armes, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Olin Gunter, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Glenn Kornegay, DCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
George Pose, DCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Scott Bannon, DCNR, Gulf Shores, AL

**Staff**

Debbie McIntyre, GSMFC, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Larry Simpson, GSMFC, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

*W. Chataginer moved to accept the agenda as written. The motion was seconded by K. Raine and passed unanimously.*

**Approval of Minutes**

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the October 13, 2009 meeting held in Biloxi, MS. *W. Chataginer moved to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by B. Norton and passed unanimously.*

**State Updates on Shrimp Concerns**

**J. Mayne** reported that Louisiana is working to develop a certification system to track shrimp from when they are caught all the way through to when they are sold. The purpose of this

system is to maximize quality and trackability. It was decided that this concept should be considered for all of the Gulf States. *A motion was made by B. Norton and seconded by R. Goodrich that the Gulf States support the concept and development of a Gulf standard for certified Gulf shrimp product that establishes enforceable guidelines to insure quality and traceability. This will aid to insure product safety and maximize marketability of domestic seafood products.*

### Joint Enforcement Agreements

The Joint Enforcement Agreements were received in a timely manner. A recommendation was made that Larry Simpson draft a letter requesting funds for JEA.

*A motion was made by Brett Norton and seconded by Walter Chatagner to request that the GSMFC draft a letter to the appropriate Federal agencies requesting that they provide the necessary financial support for the JEA program and augment with additional funding in 'out' years.*

The group will forward to **Simpson** specific amounts, total numbers of contacts for 2009, decrease in number of contacts due to funding constraints, successful cases resulting from JEAs, amount and quality of work done by NOAA, time length, and other bulleted items for his use in writing the letter. **Simpson** encouraged the group to be realistic with its requests. It was felt that the program could easily absorb \$30 million per year and possibly even more. **Norton** stated that the question has come up, from a state legislator in Florida, as to whether the FWC still needs to be doing this, based on what is going on in the Atlantic. **Norton** said that he had pointed out that it would be better to have a state officer who would use some discretion doing it because he lives in the same town as the fishermen and has to look them in the eye. In the JEA program, there are some very well-trained officers who are fisheries-oriented, rather than Coast Guard/customs oriented.

There will be a meeting in May in Miami. National meetings are held every two years.

### LJE Program Activity

**Oyster FMP** – **R. Goodrich** distributed state-specific Oyster FMP information to the group which is a general overview of each state's law enforcement of oyster issues. **Goodrich** reported that the Oyster FMP is in its final stages. These state overviews are not specific to laws that may have changed recently, but rather a generalization. He asked members to carefully review the Law Enforcement "Recommendations" section and to email changes to him by the end of March. Any changes not received by this deadline will not be used in the document. It is anticipated that the FMP will be complete within the next few months.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the VMS and its value to law enforcement and the industry. **Goodrich** reported that the industry-wide people in Texas are very receptive to this system; however, it all boiled down to who is going to pay.

**Goodrich** stated that we have to look forward to the future. VMS is a great tool for the tracking

of vessels – where they go and what they do. This is a health-related issue. The industry looks at it as the opportunity for them to have oversight over their captains and crews and what they are doing. In Texas, if a boat is caught in polluted waters, the boat is seized and the entire crew is arrested. The boat will eventually be given back. There have been four or five such violations this year, since the law was changed last year. No grace period was given. The entire crews were arrested and the vessels were seized. Consequently, it has been a very effective tool. The group agreed that VMS makes more sense in the oyster fishery than in any other fishery.

In Louisiana, if a boat is caught in polluted waters, part of the penalty package is the cost of a VMS on the violator's boat for a certain period of time. There also has to be VMS on any other boat that violator may board.

The effect of the Wildlife Violator Compact was discussed. One drawback is that it starts at present, and there is not a history of known violators in the system. It was felt that, on a Gulf-wide basis, there should be amendments to each state's Compact agreement to deal specifically with the oyster fishery. **Goodrich** recommended that each person go back and review their state's Compact information as far as oyster violation issues and be prepared to discuss as an agenda item at the next meeting. There are about 33 states involved in the Compact now

It was discussed that the FDA should be more involved in this process since we are all being regulated by the FDA. **Goodrich** said that they only see the FDA once or twice a year. **Chatagner** stated that there have been meetings and letters have been sent before to the FDA asking for rulings and funding and there has not been any funding.

Additional funding is needed from Congress.

**Arenarius Profile** – **Chatagner** reported that the white trout profile is proceeding well and there was not enough information to move forward with a full FMP. This is not a management plan but more a scoping, and the meetings have not had much involvement for law enforcement.

### Evidence/Seizures in Federal/State Cases

There was a lengthy discussion regarding disposal of property after it has been seized by the government. The question was raised about how to handle illegal catches, vessels, etc and what should be done by the states with the property. **Raines** cited NOAA procedures and the CAFRA statute which indicated a number of deadlines to be met when properties are seized, as well as, the rights of the people whose property has been seized for evidence. Disposal of seized property/evidence has to go through the NOAA office. There was discussion as to the interpretation of abandoned property versus seized property. In some states, illegal fish can be sold by the agency, while in other states it is illegal for the agency to even be in possession or sell the seized fish. The LEC members requested a clear set of guidelines regarding seizures when cases are handled in the federal system by NOAA General Council. **Raines** encouraged the group to email suggestions and concerns to her and she would be glad to take those suggestions forward to put together a set of guidelines to make it clearer to some of the states that expressed some confusion regarding these issues.

## **Transit Issues with Management Protected Areas and a Gulf Position**

**Norton** reported on transit issues with MPAs. This is an issue that just came up in the south Atlantic. The way the MPAs were written, they allow for transit. This area is about 20 to 60 miles offshore of the entire coastline of Florida. There are thousands of miles of closure with no harvest whatsoever of any reef fish. They are going to allow for transit in there. We are going to reach a point that the council is going to do what they want to do. **Norton** pointed out to the council that there will be an allowable loss because of the lack of ability to enforce the law. If the fisherman sees law enforcement on the radar, how hard is it for them to get under way? Then they are in transit with fish on board. The South Atlantic has a document that clearly outlines their position on transit. **Norton** stated that the gulf side should have the same position; basically, that transit makes enforcement very difficult. **Norton** recommended that these positions need to mirror each other. There has been discussion about designating certain fairways for transit, but **Norton** did not think this was being considered.

It was decided that the group would review the enforceability document to see if any changes should be made.

## **GSMFC Annual Law Summary and Officers' Pocket Guide**

**VanderKooy** reported on the Officers Pocket Guide. It was agreed that since it's a useful tool, the committee would provide updates to the state regulations by mid-April for inclusion in the next printing for 2010-2011. In addition, it was suggested that the guide include a couple of pages on the Magnuson Act enforcement as reference material on the water. Finally, the states would provide their enforcement contact information and state 1-800 number reporting systems for other officers to get immediate help. **Norton** suggested that a PDF file be provided for those officers who have a laptop.

**VanderKooy** also provided the last Operations Plan for 2008-2009 and asked if the LEC felt a need to update it for the next two year cycle. They agreed it was critical at this time to keep it up-to-date. Therefore, *a motion was made by Walter Chatagner and seconded by Chris Blankenship to request from the Commission, full or partial funding (with the GMFMC) for a 2-day work session to revise their operations plan for the next two years.*

## **State/Federal Reports**

The LEC ran out of time and moved their state reports to the afternoon LEAP session (see attached reports).

## **Other Business**

An interesting presentation entitled "Virtual Louisiana" was provided by representatives from the Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security.

*The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon with the state reports moving to the afternoon LEAP session.*

**Attachment:** State Reports

## **Attachment 1: State Reports**

### **FLORIDA**

Florida has made some changes at Headquarters in order to enhance both internal and external customer service. The decision was made to downgrade a vacant Deputy Director position to Major and consolidate and redistribute the program sections previously housed under the Deputy Director of Law Enforcement Program Coordination. This move has resulted in a reassignment of duties for some personnel and the addition of some new duties for others.

#### NMFS Changes

The commercial fishery for Gulf group king mackerel in the northern Florida west coast subzone was closed, effective October 24, 2009, through June 30, 2010. NOAA Fisheries Service determined that the 168,750-pound commercial quota for king mackerel for this subzone was reached. This action closed the commercial fishery for king mackerel in the Gulf of Mexico from the Alabama/Florida state boundary to the Lee/Collier County, Florida boundary. Along with the previous closure of the western zone (September 12, 2009), the commercial fishery for Gulf group king mackerel was closed from the U.S./Mexico border to the Lee/Collier County, Florida boundary.

In 2008, NOAA Fisheries Service implemented a recreational quota of 1.368 million pounds for greater amberjack harvested in the Gulf of Mexico. Recreational landings data indicated the recreational quota was met, so beginning on October 24, 2009, the recreational fishery for greater amberjack in federal waters was closed through the end of the current fishing year, December 31, 2009.

In July 2009, NOAA Fisheries Service implemented measures to establish a November-March recreational closure for the vermilion snapper fishery. The recreational fishery for vermilion snapper in the South Atlantic (North Carolina to the Florida Keys) federal waters was closed, effective November 1, 2009, through March 31, 2010.

#### Changes to the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program in the Gulf of Mexico

NOAA Fisheries Service published a rule in the *Federal Register* establishing a grouper and tilefish IFQ program for commercial fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico. This rule also made changes to the red snapper IFQ program to align that program with the grouper and tilefish IFQ program. On January 1, 2010, both IFQ programs will be merged into one online IFQ program with an updated format.

The following rules were previously proposed and are now approved: 68B-31.004 Trawl Gear Specifications: Turtle Excluder Devices Required; Exceptions; Definitions.

68B-31.0045 ~~Otter~~ Trawl Gear Specifications: Bycatch Reduction Devices.

### Accreditation

FWC is entering into its second year of accreditation status and continues to strive forward in fine tuning its policies, procedures and practices. By becoming an accredited agency, the FWC's Division of Law Enforcement becomes the largest natural resource law enforcement agency in the nation to achieve this level of distinction, and joins an elite group of fish and wildlife enforcement agencies that have successfully completed the accreditation-assessment process.

### Mobile Computer Project / LE Technology

The Mobile Computer Project will be completed this year. All field officers will have issued laptops that will allow them to run wants/warrants, fill out electronic citations and reports. The computers also have Automatic Vehicle Location ability to allow the Dispatch Centers and other officers to see exact locations of all personnel.

Our GIS and Application Development staff have created a laptop based GIS mapping solution that includes satellite imagery, NOAA Nautical Charts, Topo Maps, Street Maps and location information for jail, hospitals, EOC Centers, etc. This capability will give the officers a custom mapping solution of information that is current and a valuable tool.

### Data Entry Section

This section is responsible for the data entry of all citations and warnings issued by FWC Officers, boating citations issued by other agencies, Activity Reports, Boater Safety Cards, and Federal Fisheries Enforcement Efforts. The majority of public record requests that come to the Division usually require information pulled from the different databases that this section populates.

This section is steadily striving towards efficiencies with improvements to its databases and reporting requirements. We are currently in the process of designing several databases that will support and create efficiencies in the everyday functions of the field.

We have added a position to the section that is responsible for research and verification of dispositions. This position will ensure that the agency is receiving the proper amount of revenue that is generated from citations from the county entities.

### Federal Fisheries Support

This section is responsible for the budget for all of the large offshore vessel fleet. We are in the process of supporting many projects to keep the Offshore Fleet underway and operational. We are currently in the process of demoing many satellite data devices that will provide connectivity to the vessels in the way of: phone, internet, email, etc. This will ensure that the vessels and their crews stay connected to shore side support staff, officer safety tools, NMFS staff, and VMS to name a few. Three onboard computers are being installed / replaced in three of the boats with a complement of support navigation and support software.

Three and a half days of Federal Fisheries training was provided to a recruit class in October, and another will be conducted in April to include training from NOAA gear engineers, Special Agents, VMS managers, FWC staff and legal staff.

A Federal Fisheries information Page was completed and will be available for officers and staff as a one stop shop for the ever evolving information of Federal Fisheries.

### Radio Technology

Last report, we spoke of a very large emergency response Interoperable Communications Summit that was to take place in late January. Operation RADAR drew over 100 response entities and had over 90 pieces of equipment. Each day there were 30 exercises performed. They ranged the gamut from simple to complex and some required innovation.

The exercise lived up to its billing, and was an excellent way to test all of the interoperability equipment agencies we have available to deploy during a real event. RADAR showed us just what worked and what still needed additional tweaking.

### Fleet Management

We have purchased 96 vehicles and 13 vessels so far this fiscal year. We have started the initial steps of rigging this new equipment with our custom assortment of emergency gear. We have discovered that the quality we demand in our equipment and associated gear can only be achieved through "in-house" rigging. Although it is very labor intensive, the cost savings to the agency are tremendous. Our goal is to provide the most technically advanced, officer safety minded patrol vehicles and vessels possible.

### Communications

This section consists of three members who oversee the operations of our six Regional Communications Centers and are responsible for the coordination of communications between the state's Joint Task Force agencies, federal agencies and our communications personnel statewide. This team has the added responsibility of administering, managing, maintaining and replacing most of the equipment used in our communications centers to include our Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, FCIC/NCIC systems, Florida Interoperability Network, telephone systems and audio recording devices.

## **ALABAMA**

The Alabama Marine Resources Division has prepared a comprehensive oyster management document and will begin to implement some of the changes to our oyster management this year. We have a bill in the legislature that will make some changes to allow us to further implement our program. We are beginning a large oyster relay project on March 15, 2010. We plan to move over 100,000 sacks of oysters from recently reclassified waters to an open area to create a new oyster reef. MRD Enforcement Officers will monitor the area 24 hours per day for 3 weeks until the oysters have depurated. The area will be open for harvest some time after the depuration process when the oysters have been tested and deemed safe for consumption.

We are receiving the three hour notifications again to assist in the inspection of commercial reef fish vessels. The new IFQ system is up and is being improved. All the MRD officers now have access to the VMS system. At the four day Mobile Boat Show we had a display and conducted public outreach. Over 60 percent of the questions we received from the public were about red snapper.

Alabama completed a commercial gill net buyout in 2009. Forty-seven people participated in the buyout. Due to the buyout, weather, and other factors the landings for most species were down over 40% last year. Spanish mackerel and blue runners were down over 70%.

Alabama opened the longest pier in the Gulf of Mexico in July, 2009. The pier at Gulf State Park is over 1500 feet long and is open 24 hours a day. We have a bill in the legislature to create a nonresident pier fishing license that would cost \$10. Nonresidents have to purchase either a seven trip license or an annual license to fish from the pier currently. We currently have a resident license for \$5.

We have several new regulations that have been proposed but due to time constraints, they will be included in the report for the October meeting.

## **MISSISSIPPI**

- Triple tail regulations - three fish 18" minimum
- All residents to have license in legislative process moving along smoothly
- Revoke license after five convictions in a five-year period
- Federal patrols are continuing with contacts, one case made with 139 shark fins also had filet fish. Case in question
- Hired three new officers
- More to report in October after legislative session

## **LOUISIANA**

Total division head count is 257 positions, with an average of 10-20 vacancies at any given time due to retirement, resignation, etc. The actual number of filled positions (as of February 2010) is 257, including 233 enforcement agents and 24 administrative staff including six communications officers and two pilots.

Current funding provides a field enforcement staff of two to four agents per parish, according to the nature of wildlife-based activities in the area, the number of people participating, the frequency of their participation and other factors.

Though LDWF/LED has managed to maintain a high level of performance despite the reduction in the number of law enforcement agent positions, there are concerns that further reductions may compromise the ability to accomplish the division's goals of resource conservation, law enforcement and public safety (Figure 3).

### Regional Enforcement Programs

Most of the law enforcement activity performed by LDWF/LED is conducted by regional agents. Regional agents work a schedule assigned by their supervisors to address seasonal needs,



reported violations, weather conditions and predominant activities. Agents are on-call 24 hours per day and must be willing to change their work hours and locations as circumstances require. Schedules are often changed due to weather and reported violations, and agents are often called out to respond to violations in progress, boating and hunting accidents, and calls for search and rescue.

The primary patrol vessels used during water patrols are outboard bay boats and 19-to-32foot marine patrol vessels. LDWF/LED also deploys go-devils, airboats, surface river mudboats, bass boats and flatboats.

### Specialized Units

LDWF/LED contains five specialized units with selected missions or purposes: the Special Operations Section; the Special Investigations Unit; the Oyster Strike Force; the Statewide Strike Force; and the Aviation Section. Agents in specialized units have developed specific skills, expertise and knowledge appropriate for their particular operational fields. Agents in specialized units operate in relatively broad geographic areas and may work alongside regional enforcement agents when appropriate.

The Special Operations Section houses covert operations, in which undercover agents work to stem the illegal sale of fish and wildlife, develop information about ongoing criminal enterprises and address major violations of state and federal law.

The Special Investigations Unit devotes attention to commercial fisheries operations and license fraud. Violations include smuggling, interstate commerce violations and false reporting and under-reporting of commercial fish harvests.

The Oyster Strike Force works with region agents in coastal regions to address violations in the oyster industry, primarily harvesting from closed waters, stealing from oyster leases and state grounds and oyster size regulations.

The Statewide Strike Force is assigned to work problem areas statewide. These agents provide regions with additional manpower on WMAs and places of high seasonal utilization, such as Grand Isle and other locations throughout the state.

The Aviation Section contains two pilots and three airplanes. The Aviation Section's aircraft provide a valuable platform for detecting illegal hunting and fishing activities and frequently play a vital life-saving role in search and rescue operations. The Aviation Section also contributes its services to other divisions for biological missions, such as waterfowl counts and the monitoring of commercial fisheries.

### Boating Safety Program

With 15,000 miles of tidal coastline, 5,000 miles of navigable waterways, three of the busiest ports in the country, a thriving shipping industry, a large commercial fishing fleet and over 300,000 registered boats, Louisiana contains many geographic, demographic and economic features that pose special challenges for boating safety enforcement. LDWF/LED agents made 249,616 public contacts during the course of 95,771 patrol hours dedicated to boating

enforcement, education and accident investigation in fiscal year 2008-2009. More than 79,991 patrol hours were performed in vessels on the water.

The adoption of "Rules of the Road" regulations for boaters has enhanced the enforcement of boating safety regulations and boating under the influence laws. These regulations provide the boating public with clear rules for the manner in which boats are operated and are an important tool in determining fault in boating accidents. The "Rules of the Road" also enhance the ability of agents to address reckless and careless operation of motorboats. In fiscal year 2008-2009, LDWF/LED agents issued 171 citations for careless and reckless operation of a vessel and 156 citations for operating a vessel while intoxicated.

The statewide LDWF/LED boater education course teaches safe, legal and responsible boat operation and is approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators. This program provides a vital outreach to the community that has greatly improved the awareness of and compliance with boating safety practices and regulations in Louisiana. Agents hold monthly classes in each region for anyone who wishes or is required by Louisiana law to take them. In fiscal year 2008-2009, 5,072 citizens attended 220 classes, less than the previous fiscal year due to hurricanes Gustav and Ike. LDWF/LED continues to recruit and train additional volunteer instructors to complement and enhance the efforts of its own agents.

Agents provided 17,131 patrol hours of search and rescue services, both on land and water, in fiscal year 2008-2009. These operations have saved lives, reduced the suffering of accident victims, stranded hunters, boaters and anyone else needing assistance, and minimized the anxiety for family members eager to learn the fate of their loved ones. Agents regularly train to hone their search and rescue skills and constantly work to develop close working relationships with other agencies to coordinate response efforts.

#### Agent Training Program

The Wildlife and Fisheries Law Enforcement Academy graduated nine agents in fiscal year 2008-2009. The academy trains and certifies cadets in a wide variety of areas, including the Peace Officers Standards and Training Council certification required of all law enforcement officers. Cadets live at the academy during the week and experience a boot camp-style program, with daily physical training in addition to classroom activities. There are many hands-on courses, such as waterfowl enforcement practices, boat operation and firearms training. Each cadet is equipped with a laptop computer with the capability for networking through the Internet for access to web-based courses and research sites.

Cadets receive training in numerous courses of study and are certified in 10 courses of training conducted by FBI-certified trainers from LDWF/LED and expert trainers from a number of other agencies. LDWF/LED personnel conduct training in standardized field sobriety testing, basic marine theft, basic defensive tactics, collapsible baton techniques, wildlife agents' aquatic survival and chemical weapon indoctrination. The Louisiana State Police provides training in chemical testing for insobriety.

The Louisiana State Police Highway Safety Division leads classes in DWI detection, and the Department of Public Safety conducts a Louisiana Safe Driver's Course.

### Joint Enforcement Agreement

LDWF/LED again entered into a Joint Enforcement Agreement with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office for Enforcement. LDWF/LED received approximately \$1,469,000 in fiscal year 2008-2009 to patrol for compliance with federal commercial and recreational fisheries regulations, primarily in the Gulf of Mexico. Several patrol vessels and other necessary equipment have been acquired under this program. Agents have been very successful identifying illegal and unregulated fishing activity and obtaining a number of large cases involving commercial and recreational violations.

### Operation Game Thief

Louisiana Operation Game Thief, Inc. is a program which provides cash rewards to those providing information leading to the apprehension of wildlife violators. Violations can be reported anonymously by accessing LDWF's Web site ([www.wlf.louisiana.gov](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov)) or by calling a 24-hour toll-free telephone number (1-800-442-2511) maintained in the LDWF Communications Center. Reports are immediately referred to agents for action. The callers may remain anonymous. Rewards totaling \$10,000 were paid on 45 cases. The total amount of rewards paid by Operation Game Thief since its inception 25 years ago is \$263,800.

### Homeland Security

LDWF/LED is an active participant in Louisiana's Homeland Security Plan and represents the state in waterborne emergencies. Through the Office of Emergency Preparedness, LDWF/LED is the lead agency for search and rescue operations during natural disasters and maritime security of Louisiana's vital business and government interests along the coast and major rivers. As members of the Governor's Homeland Security Advisory Council, the Area Maritime Security Executive Steering Committee and all major port security committees within the state, LDWF/LED enforcement agents frequently respond to requests to deploy LDWF marine resources for security concerns. LDWF/LED specialized training and equipment and its ability to operate throughout the state's vast maze of waterways and wild areas has complemented Louisiana's ability to respond to emergencies on land and water.

LDWF/LED has developed a five-year maritime security strategic plan in order to provide direction and guidance for the expansion of its mission to include maritime security. This role further advances coordination efforts between the United States Coast Guard, Louisiana State Police, federal, state, ports and local government and private partnerships to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of maritime safety and security and all hazards response for Louisiana and our nation. This expansion is necessary in order to meet the needs and threats that we are faced with in Louisiana's maritime domain.

LDWF/LED recently created the Louisiana Maritime Security Working Group in order to provide better communication and coordination between the multiple regional layers of security on the state's waterways, so that we can safely and effectively support these layers at the state level. LDWF/LED is also a member of the First Responder Committee through GOHSEP which was legislatively created. The LDWF/LED's maritime security role coincides as a multi-mission responsibility and further enhances the agency's core mission responsibilities: to improve public safety services and protect natural resources and the supporting ecosystem while improving security in the state and nation.

### Maritime Search & Rescue Course

Since the devastating landfalls of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, several law enforcement agencies across Louisiana have recognized the vital need to train officers in all aspects of search and rescue (SAR), especially maritime search and rescue. LDWF/LED, as the primary agency for SAR in the state, received several requests from law enforcement agencies to share the benefit of its wide experience in the area by providing maritime SAR training to their officers.

In 2007, the Louisiana Peace Officers Standards and Training Council granted LDWF/LED approval to offer the Maritime Search and Rescue Course (MSARC) to qualified POST-certified peace officers. The 40-hour MSARC was designed and implemented to train other law enforcement officers in such areas as marine SAR, Louisiana Emergency Operation Plans (ESF-9 SAR), navigation rules, vessel handling, waterborne arrest techniques and more. During fiscal year 2008-2009 three MSARC courses were offered by LDWF/LED.

## **TEXAS**

### F/V MARGIE L

On 11/19/2009 Matagorda County Game Warden David Janssen observed a commercial snapper boat unloading its catch at a local fish house in Palacios. Warden Janssen noticed the majority of the catch was several bins full of Greater Amberjack. Warden Janssen made a couple of phone calls to fellow Matagorda County Game Warden Aaron Koenig and federal agents to verify that the federal season for that species was closed, which it had been for nearly two weeks. 8,310 pounds of Greater Amberjack were unloaded from the vessel "Margie L" and held until the arrival of NOAA Agent Matt Clark. Once Agent Clark arrived, he and Warden Koenig interviewed the Captain and crew, and later sold the catch of Amberjack to a high bidder. F/V MARGIE L was issued a \$25,000 fine, given a 40 day permit sanction and required forfeiture of the \$5,500 in seized amberjack (taken in a closed season). A great job working with NOAA to turn a state JEA boarding into a great Federal case.

### TASK FORCE GALVESTON

On 10/21/09, a multi-agency inspection/operation targeting shrimp vessels and shrimp buyers at two locations in the Galveston area. The operational team consisted of the following:

- 2 Texas Parks and Wildlife Wardens
- 2 NOAA OLE Special Agents
- 2 USCG LTJG's from Sector Houston
- 6 CBP Marine Interdiction Officers
- 1 Harris County Marine Enforcement Officer
- 1 NOAA Port Agent
- 1 NOAA OLE Intern


During phase one at Texas Gulf Seafood 6 shrimp vessels were boarded while tied to the dock. Only two of the vessels had a captain or crew aboard capable of showing the required paperwork or the ability to operate the machinery necessary to lower the TEDs and hang them for inspection. The two checked were found to be in compliance. Incidentally, one of the vessels was the MISS CATHY. This vessel was recently issued a NOVA of \$30,000 and forfeited \$27,000

for major TED violations. These issues had clearly been rectified by the new captain. However, one of the crew members aboard the MISS CATHY was found to have a valid ICE warrant for illegal re-entry into the US. The crew member was a citizen of Honduras and had previously been deported for criminal convictions. This individual was arrested by the team, and turned over to ICE agents for prosecution and removal. An inspection was done of a 10,000 square foot shrimp processing facility looking for everything from farm raised shrimp being mislabeled and packed as domestic wild caught shrimp from the Gulf of Mexico, or other illegal products for which the plant did not have permits for (red snapper, flounder etc). No evidence of violations was noted. The USCG terminated one vessel for safety violations (it was about to leave to fish) but had not life raft or functioning EPRIB. During phase two of the operation, the team traveled 30 minutes by vessel to Milt's Seafood on Bolivar Peninsula. Four additional vessels were inspected, as well as the seafood house.

#### BARRA LA COMA

On 10/29/09 Ocean Harvest Seafood, located in Houston imported 3,203 lbs of red snapper from Mexico. Upon inspection by game wardens, and NOAA, it was determined that the fish had been layered to conceal illegal, undersized red snapper. A total of 1,781 lbs of undersized red snapper was seized and sold for \$7,569.25 plus restitution. Five state cases were filed against the dealer who shipped in from Mexico.

APPROVED BY:

  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Tuesday, March 9, 2010  
Orange Beach, Alabama**

**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, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Chris Denson, *GSMFC Commissioner*, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL  
Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, 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  
Wendy Garner, Staff Accountant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Janet Lumpkin, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Mike Ray, TPWD, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX  
Mandy Tumlin, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Tonya Wiley, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Preston Pate, NOAA Fisheries Service, Newport, NC  
Read Hendon, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

*A motion to adopt the agenda; as written was made by K. Foote and was passed unanimously.*

## Approval of Minutes

*A motion to approve the minutes; as written, for the meeting held on October 13, 2009 was made by K. Cuevas and passed with no opposition.*

## Overview of Marine Recreational Information Program: P. Pate

**P. Pate** started his presentation with an overview of the existing regional recreational angler data collection programs across the U.S. He pointed out that the one that has gotten the most attention through the years is Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics survey (MRFSS) that applies for Maine down to the coast of Texas that began in 1978. Over the year this data was stretched way beyond its normal intent and the confidence limits that managers had in the program. The NMFS petitioned for a review of these data collection program by the National Research Council. Following its review, the Council provided a report in 2006, which identified a number of problems with the various programs with a lot of emphasis on MRFSS and supplied recommendations for ways to improve them. The first step that the NMFS took was to create the Marine Recreational Information program was to establish an Executive Steering Committee which oversees from a police standpoint the direction and priorities of the program. Under this Steering Committee there a four teams that tackle specific tasks of the program. These include the Operations Team, Registry Team, Information Management Team and the Communications and Outreach Team. The Operations Team is responsible for the technical component of the program, conducting a variety of pilot projects and making the necessary improvements to the actual survey methodologies. This team has six work groups under it; each of these work groups will tackle a specific problem with the surveys.

Last year the Executive Steering Committee approved an implementation plan which sets out the basic strategy for operation and completion of this program and identifies three different phases of the project (evaluation, innovation and activation). The objective of the evaluation phase is evaluation of current sampling and estimation methods. To accomplish this goal they identified and consolidated information on existing recreational datasets, evaluated the MRFSS sampling and estimation designs for effort and catch, conducted an expert review of methods to assess for-hire marine recreational fisheries and are currently doing an evaluation of quality assurance and quality control in recreational fishing data collections. The innovation phase has the objective of pilot testing new sampling and estimation methods. The teams have several tasks that they are carrying out to try and meet this objective, including developing methods that utilize angler registries as sample frames which they has four projects working on. They are also designing and testing a new sampling design for access point intercept surveys of angler catches and have completed a project for design and implementation of a new estimation method for the current MRFSS sampling design. Some of the other projects that have been completed under this phase of the project are, conducted pilot highly migratory species surveys in Florida, evaluated the sampling distribution of tournament versus non-tournament trips in the large pelagic survey and conducted for-hire census with pilot electronic reporting option for Puerto Rico catch and effort data. The teams also have several projects ongoing under this phase, including, cooperatively design a logbook reporting program for the Gulf of Mexico, improving the southeast headboat survey and assessing survey coverage of angling populations. The activation phase has three objectives 1) apply new survey methods as supported by pilot projects, 2) benchmark new survey

methods against old survey methods and 3) meet customer needs for precision and resolution. In 2010 the group will start work on initiatives to reach the objectives of this phase. These initiatives include, implementing dual frame surveys, using both a coastal household and a registry sample frame as state registry data sets are provided to NOAA Fisheries. They will also begin to calculate estimates of catch for Atlantic Coast and Gulf of Mexico utilizing the revised estimation method as well as recalculate and revise historic estimates of catch for the Atlantic and Gulf coasts based on the revised method. Their final initiative in this phase is to apply new intercept survey protocols as warranted by ongoing project.

The operations team has received 15 project proposals as a result of the priorities that they set for 2010 and has completed the preliminary review of them. They have compiled a summary of all team member comments and will have a conference call in late March – early April to go over all these reviews and produce a refined list of projects to send to the Executive Steering Committee for final approval for funding by mid April. The proposed projects deal with improved license surveys, survey coverage, sampling and estimation, costs to support management, discards, for-hire improvements and rare event species.

When this overall project is complete, MRIP will avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to gathering data by creating an interlocking system of seven regional surveys that can best take into account local factors. As well as, ensure high quality data while also maximizing local control and flexibility. **P. Pate** went on to state that the completed project would establish a set of national standards that define minimum data elements, survey coverage, and best practices for data collection and analysis. The ongoing research projects will help refine these national standards and identify other potential information sources. The final MRIP will also provide regional data partners with the proven methodologies to extend coverage beyond the standard minimums. **P. Pate** pointed out that MRIP will not be a silver bullet solution to all our fishery management and data problems like rare event species and the need for real time monitoring of landings for accountability. He also pointed out that one of the most important future efforts of this project is to continue good communication between the data generators and the data users to avoid getting us back to the same place we started from in the first place, stretching the limits of the data beyond the point where the results are reliable.

The following report was supplied to the Committee in the meeting folders from **Gordon Colvin**

MRIP Registry MOA Status: GSMFC Meeting March 8 – 10, 2010

Draft MOA's are being prepared for all Gulf Coast states, and are expected to be mailed to agency heads within the month. When mailed to the Agency leadership, a copy will be e-mailed to each agency's staff point of contact. The proposed MOA's will include standardized provisions for:

- Data elements and transmission protocols;
- NOAA review of data quality and state agency planning for data quality improvement;

States may propose modifications of the standard provisions if necessary, and negotiate MOA revisions with NOAA Fisheries.

Funding will be made available (\$2.5 M in FY 2010) for grants to support states' efforts to improve the quality of their license data bases and the timeliness and efficiency of data delivery to NOAA Fisheries. We expect to work through the Commissions to administer these



grants with the states. This amount is also in the President's FY 2011 budget request and we hope it continue to be available.

### **Discussion of the Draft GSMFC's BMPs for Inshore Artificial Reefs**

**J. Rester** gave a brief overview of the history behind the development of this document. This started at a Habitat Subcommittee meeting in 2008 when the chairman thought this would be a good use of the Subcommittee's time in conjunction with the Artificial Reef Subcommittee. The Habitat Subcommittee developed a draft document for their March 2009 meeting and at that meeting had a presentation from a Florida representative that was working on developing a similar document for Florida's inshore artificial reefs. The Subcommittee incorporated a lot of the numbers used in the Florida document in their current draft. The Habitat Subcommittee revised the draft BMP's over the summer of 2009 and had the Artificial Reef Subcommittee review the revised document. At the October 2009 meeting of the Habitat Subcommittee they approved this document and had a motion to pass it on to the TCC for review. Between that meeting and this current meeting, the review was completed and several concerns with the document were pointed out, so the focus of this discussion is how we should proceed from here. **K. Foote** recommended that the Artificial Reef Subcommittee have a meeting to discuss this document in depth and work through some of the major concerns they have with it. **V. Vail** made the recommendation that a joint meeting between the Habitat and Artificial Reef Subcommittees be held to work on this document together and then bring a revised document that has been approved by both Subcommittees back to the TCC at their next meeting in October. **J. Ballard** pointed out that the Artificial Reef Subcommittee will not be holding its joint meeting with the Atlantic States Subcommittee in 2010, therefore, the Subcommittee is available and there are funds to support this meeting with the Habitat Subcommittee this year. The TCC decided to proceed with this joint meeting and would like to have a revised draft to review at their next meeting.

### **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 three ponds of crabs they harvested one and it had poor survival. They attribute this to the fact that the pond was lined and they are optimistic that the other two will have better results because they are earthen ponds. There is an interest in using these reared crabs for the bait market and they will provide some crabs for a spring cobia tournament in MS. In Texas they have been communicating with a U.S Fish and Wildlife biologist that is looking into the feasibility of using blue crab aquaculture to supplement the feed for declining populations of whooping cranes in a wildlife refuge in central Texas. In Florida they are continuing to look into intensive culture techniques of crabs in conjunction with their lipofuscin research for aging. This research is being carried out in three phases; they have completed the first phase by comparing the concentration of lipofuscin from the left and right eye stocks of healthy crabs and found no difference which will greatly reduce the needed sample size. In the second phase they are looking at the viability of freezing samples to increase the speed and number of samples that they can complete. The final stage will utilize known age crabs from their aquaculture program to establish standards and then to be able to identify ages

of wild caught crabs. All five states held volunteer based derelict crab trap cleanups in 2009-2010. Texas held theirs in mid-February and retrieved 1582 traps coast wide. Louisiana held their cleanup on February 22 and collected 477 derelict traps. They noted that volunteer participation continues to be an issue. Mississippi retrieved 349 traps in their three day closure in late January. They will likely not hold a cleanup in 2011. Alabama directed their volunteer efforts to the upper bay and collected 287 traps. They also will not hold a cleanup in 2011. Finally, Florida held a state-wide blue crab cleanup which was spread over the whole year. There were six zones which were targeted roughly every three to four weeks. A total of 4,186 traps were removed from coastal waters. The future cleanups will stagger locations to allow for funds to be better used in dedicated cleanups. Florida noted that they collected 6,108 lobster and stone crab traps in the Florida Keys in 2009 as well. Each of the five states reported on their commercial blue crab landings, in Florida and Alabama the landings were down from previous years and they were up slightly in Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. There continues to be a downward trend in effort, for example, in Florida they had a 62% reduction in licenses and 11% decline in total number of traps fished. Alabama has seen a decline in the processing sector (up to 30%) do to the reduction in the work force. MSDMR continues to work closely with the industry and is distributing TED's to the fishermen to use in their traps. The subcommittee had one action item; **to draft a letter to the EDF and Monterey Bay Aquarium asking for more information on their sources related to health advisories in the Gulf for blue crabs.** The Subcommittee would draft the letter and then have it approved by the TCC and the full Commission. It was recommended by the TCC that the Subcommittee try and get more information about were EDF got their data before writing the letter. The Subcommittee agreed to this recommendation and will research this problem and bring their findings back to the TCC at their next meeting in October.

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

**SEAMAP:**

**R. Hendon** stated that the subcommittee heard two presentations one by Bob McMichael from FL FWC and the other by himself. Bob presented on costs and capabilities for gut content processing and otolith processing of SEAMAP samples that may be future work needed to be processed for stock assessment needs. Head gave an overview of processing and costs for stable isotope analyses that would be used in conjunction with stomach content analyses for the same ecosystem based analysis. They also discussed strategic planning; they have been working with the NOAA Pascagoula lab to decide where to go with this. There were also discussions amongst the Subcommittee members about this and were it is leading is they are going to try and plan a fisheries independent data workshop in the fall of 2010. The goal of this workshop will be to meet with stock assessment personnel in the various NOAA Fisheries labs, university researchers and other stock assessment professionals to look at where the needs and the direction SEAMAP needs to take with the studies it conducts to have the data utilized in stock assessments. John Mareska with Alabama presented an overview of some vertical line sampling they are going to do to fill in some data gaps they have for reef fish ages. The state components of shrimp and ground fish cruises have been using different methodologies in terms of sampling and they are trying to be more consistent with this effort. They will be going to standard 30 minute tow times with no day/night designations in 2010 to be consistent with NOAA's offshore cruises.

*A motion to accept the report was moved by D. Diaz and passed without opposition.*

**Data Management:**

**K. Cuevas** reported that Gregg Bray reviewed the biological data collection at the GSMFC. He stated that all states summated their 2009 biological data. Donna Bellais gave an overview of the web based data entry program that the states can submit their biological sampling data on. Dave Donaldson stated that the GSMFC hired a contractor to help move forward the commercial vessel information project. Dave also gave an update on the Texas and Florida pan handle log book project; he stated that the start date should be this year. The Subcommittee reviewed and recommended the HMS data collection and management recommendation to the FIN Committee. They also reviewed and recommended the at-sea sampling protocols to the FIN Committee. The meta data entry project has also been hitting stumbling blocks for the Gulf states; after some discussion the Subcommittee recommended that they hire a part time person that would work at the GSMFC office to help move this project forward.

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

**Artificial Reef:**

**J. Ballard** stated that the Subcommittee held a joint meeting with the ASMFC's artificial reef Subcommittee in St. Petersburg, Fl. on October 27-28, 2009. The Subcommittee heard a talk from Dr. William Lindberg concerning the development of the Steinhatchee Fisheries Management Area in the Big Bend region of FL. In this talk he explained how they used habitat size effects on gag grouper and the fact that smaller reefs are harder to find by fishermen and therefore get less fishing pressure to establish the reef layout for the management area. Their strategy is to randomly scatter small artificial reefs to get the biological benefit, but they will not publish the coordinates of the reefs. Once all the reefs are in they will monitor the gag grouper population and assess the potential for artificial reefs to be used in fisheries management decisions. Dr. William Huth gave a presentation on artificial reef economics. Bill discussed the economic impact as well as consumer surplus to divers of the Oriskany and Vandenberg reefs generated by scuba diving. They utilized a web-based survey design to gather information from the diving public and also asked questions about the potential benefits of grouping large ships at one diving destination. They determined that the number of trips would almost double if a destroyer was added to a dive trip with the Oriskany and the consumer surplus increased from \$559 to \$1,082. Bill also discussed his plans for future work on the Vandenberg; he has collected pre sink surveys to establish expected demand and impact and will be collecting revealed demand to compare the two. The Vandenberg is expected to have a higher economic impact than the Oriskany because of its closer proximity to land. We had a presentation on the abundance and distribution of goliath grouper by Angela Collins. Angela pointed out that goliath grouper are highly associated with reefs and there is a direct correlation to the number of grouper and the volume of the reef. Because of this, there is a much higher presence over artificial reef habitat (90%) than natural reefs (35%). She is tagging fish with external tags using a spear gun with the help of 15+ volunteer spear fishermen that are certified to collect data. Over the two years of her study she has seen an increase in densities and the population seems to be recovering, however, it is still critically endangered internationally. Jeff Tinsman from Delaware gave a presentation on commercial and recreational conflicts on artificial reef sites. This seems to be a problem all along the eastern seaboard. The problem arises from commercial potting on

the artificial reefs, the high density potting makes it impossible to drift fish with hook and line gear. This has been a problem from New England through Virginia and has been getting worse in recent years and is starting to impact the use of Wallop-Breaux grant funds for artificial reefing. In New Jersey a group called Reef Rescue formed and sent a letter to Dr. John Organ (USFWS federal administrator in charge of Wallop-Breaux and Pittman-Robertson fund distributions) because they did not think the state was doing enough about the problem. Dr. Organ replied that the commercial use of the reefs cannot interfere with grant objectives and it is the responsibility of the state to manage the conflicts. Following that response, Jeff stated that Delaware had a conference call with USFWS. USFWS noted that at this time, development of ocean sites with Corps permits and approved by USFWS 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 added that going through the Councils to establish special management zones 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. We had an update on the ex-Arthur W. Radford Project by Jeff Tinsman. The Radford is a 564 foot Spruance class destroyer that was commissioned in 1977. This reefing project will be a three state effort between Delaware, New Jersey and Maryland in cooperation with the Navy. The four parties involved will equally share the \$750,000 cost for reefing. American Marine Group was the low bidder on the cleaning and reefing project and they are expecting it to only take 110 days to prepare the ship. The involved states are shooting for a late spring/early summer 2010 sink date. The subcommittees decided to move the time of the meetings from the fall to January or February to avoid conflicts with monitoring or deployments in some states. The next joint Subcommittee meeting will be held early in 2011. Doug Peter was elected as chair and Kerwin Cuevas as vice chair.

*A motion to accept the report was moved by D. Diaz and passed without opposition.*

#### **Fisheries Outreach:**

**J. Ballard** reported that this subcommittee met for the first time this morning and started with each state gave an overview of their outreach activities. Rich Abrams with Florida FWC gave an overview of 14 of FL's aquatic education and angler outreach programs. Including the Kids' fishing clinics that targets children 4-16 years of age. Since 1996, more than 46,000 children have participated in the clinics. He also talked about the Kids' Fishing Activity Box program. This program is designed to provide anyone interested in teaching children about fisheries conservation and fishing the ability to hold an educational fishing day, similar to the FWC's Kid's Fishing Clinics. He also covered the Make-A-Difference Fishing Foundation Special Opportunity Fishing Events in which, Marine fisheries outreach and FWC hatchery staff work with a non-profit organization to provide fishing opportunities for kids with physical and mental disabilities. Dan Ellinor covered Florida's commercial outreach activities. His main goal is to keep the industry updated on any regulatory changes and one way he does this is by producing 3 newsletters per year. He also compiles a regulations booklet once a year. They make all these materials available to the industry in both English and Spanish. Once a month he dose "house calls" where he goes out with a crabber or visits a fish house to help establish a level of trust with the industry. David Rainer talked about Alabama's efforts including their kids' art work calendars and their marine information calendars that contain a lot of information for fishermen. He also explained about their efforts to introduce inner city kids to fishing through education programs. Traci Floyd and Lauren Thompson gave a presentation of Mississippi's

activities. They covered some of the partnerships they have developed with other agencies in the region to carry out outreach activities. They also covered their live bait shrimp outreach program in which they inspected and licensed 17 camps, 18 vessels, 11 transport vehicles. They covered the activities of the MS Crab Task Force and their derelict crab trap removal program where they have removed and recycled 18,270 traps to date. They covered their recreational fishing outreach event "Casting for conservation" and gave an overview of their Monofilament Recycling Program. Mandy Tumlin with LDWF talked about the Louisiana Cooperative Marine Sport Fish Tagging Program. This program, to date has over 450 participating anglers that have tagged over 6,000 fish. She discussed the derelict crab trap removal program and pointed out how they removed 469 traps in one day in February of this year. They are working on developing a fishing line recycling program and they are also planning on putting together outreach materials to be used at the Bass masters' classic that will be held in LA for the next two years. Tonya Wiley with TPWD talked about their outreach materials they produce to inform the public on regulation changes. In the summer of 2009 they launched a tarpon observation network and information on this is available on their website. She discussed their Certified Conservation Guide Program. They are in the process of creating this program and the online curriculum for fishing guide certification. She stated that Texas is using a variety of social media sites to help with their outreach efforts. Charlene Ponce with the GMFMC covered their online and web-based initiatives and video messaging and other technology including a Smartphone application that they are using for outreach. She states that they are using a number of social media sources to help get their word out and they also utilize direct mail. They are trying to get an education program for the southeast region based on the model used in the northeast. They will find out at the end of March if this program is funded or not. She also stated that they are hiring a fisheries outreach specialist. Jeff Fleming called in to discuss some of the activities of the US FWS in region 4. He said their effort now is to move to web based outreach and they are embracing social media sources and have hired a new young employee to handle this project. They are continuing to work on everglades restoration outreach work and they have been doing cooperative communication work with SARP. They are also working on developing a mobile platform for some of their outreach material. Chuck Adams provided the subcommittee with a report that covers a variety of outreach projects that Sea Grant is carrying out across the Gulf coast region. He wanted the subcommittee to know that there is a potential for coordination with Sea Grant on outreach projects. The Subcommittee concluded this first meeting with a discussion of where to go from here. Overall the Subcommittee felt that this meeting was beneficial and they would like to continue with this cooperative effort. It was decided that the Subcommittee would hold another meeting at the Commission's fall 2010 meeting in Clearwater, Florida.

*D. Diaz made a motion to accept the report and it passed unanimously.*

#### **State/Federal Reports:**

##### **Florida Report: V. Vail/R. Cody**

##### **Extreme Cold Event -January 2010 – Impacts on Florida's Fish and Wildlife**

The New Year began in Florida with an unprecedented two week period of freezing to sub-freezing temperatures throughout the state; nearshore water temperatures in the Florida Keys dropped into the upper 40's, low 50's and ice was observed in the Shark Slough area of

Everglades National Park. This prolonged cold spell had, and continues to have, a significant impact on Florida's marine life, as well as agriculture/aquaculture operations. Some effects were seen almost immediately, such as cold-stunned sea turtles and extensive fish kills, while other impacts are ongoing, such as manatees affected by cold-stress syndrome.

Fish from many waterways statewide have been affected, including freshwater lakes, ponds, canals, estuaries and near-shore coastal waters. Reports to FWC offices, calls to the FWC Fish Kill Hotline as well as in-the-field observations by FWC staff indicate that a wide variety of saltwater and freshwater species have been affected by this severe cold event. Some of the marine species include: snook, tarpon, bonefish, mullet, red and black drum, catfish, groupers (Nassau, black, gag, red and goliath), snapper (lane and mangrove), grunts, catfish, ladyfish, barracuda, parrotfish, several baitfish species, stingrays and sharks. Affected native freshwater fish species include largemouth bass, bream, crappie, and catfish.

In south Florida, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of exotic freshwater fish have also been impacted by the cold. These include butterfly peacock bass, oscar, jaguar guapote, clown knifefish, suckermouth catfish, pacu, sailfin catfish, bullseye snakehead, spotted tilapia, tilapia hybrids, brown hoplo, walking catfish, and Mayan cichlid. All but one of these species became established in the wild as the result of illegal introductions and are generally considered undesirable.

The widespread nature of this event across multiple species and aquatic habitats makes it nearly impossible to quantify the magnitude of the fish kills by species or by region. Staff have responded to well over 1,150 calls from the public about fish kills since early January. The FWC Fish and Wildlife Health group is compiling the statewide cold-kill information reported through the FWC Fish Kill Hotline. After all this information is checked, cross-referenced, and tallied we'll have a better idea of the geographic extent of the event and a general idea of the species, and size-classes, affected. While fish kill reports provide a general picture of the geographic extent and magnitude of cold-related mortalities, most likely we'll never really know how many fish of how many species died from the cold. What we can say now is that this has been an unusually long and intense cold event (i.e., not the kind of cold event we see on a regular basis) that caused massive mortalities of a large number of our inshore fish.

According to FWRI scientists, it will be several months before we begin to have an idea of how the fish populations were actually affected by this cold event. "Dead fish counts" are very uncertain (read "unreliable"...) for a number of reasons: some are consumed by scavengers before they ever float and could be counted by somebody; some float but may end up washed up on shore and consumed by other scavengers (raccoons, birds.) before being counted; some decompose quickly and are not around long enough to be seen; and some are pushed by currents, winds, or tides into inaccessible areas (e.g., intertidal mangrove forests) where they may never be seen. The only reliable way to assess the impact of massive mortality events like this (cold kills, red tides, etc.) is to look at the species' catch rates documented in FWRI's standardized, long-term surveys. Because these surveys are long-term, occur over different areas of the state, and follow standardized, statistically-based sampling protocols they provide a "before-and-after" statewide perspective of the impacts of the prolonged cold spell. A species that suffered losses high enough to impact the population will definitely show lower catch rates after an event like

this. The degree of decrease in catch rates for a species provides an estimate of the relative impact on the population: for some species we might see catch rates cut by 1/2, others by only 1/3, and others maybe not at all. Important questions to be considered during the next several months include: how many spawning-size snook/tarpon/sea trout/red drum/bonefish/angels/ barracudas/etc. were lost; were these losses large enough to compromise reproduction in the population for the next few years; how many juveniles from the 2009 year-class were lost; and was mortality of a species greater on the Atlantic or Gulf coast?

#### FWC Response to Cold-Weather Saltwater Fish Kills

On January 15, the FWC issued two Executive Orders in response to widespread cold-weather saltwater fish kills. Executive Order 10-03 extends the closed harvest season for snook until September 1 statewide and establishes statewide closed harvest seasons for bonefish and tarpon until April 1. This order only prohibits the harvest or possession of snook, bonefish and tarpon during the closed periods. The FWC has advised anglers that they may still catch and release these species during the temporary closures while encouraging them to handle and release fish carefully to help ensure their survival upon release.

These fisheries were closed temporarily as a precautionary measure. During the closures, the FWC intends to examine all available information on the extent and impact of the freeze and then determine whether any additional actions are needed to protect these fisheries. And, while mortality of other saltwater and freshwater fish species has been observed, there is not yet sufficient information to determine whether or not additional management actions are necessary.

Executive Order 10-02 temporarily suspended certain saltwater fishing regulations, including bag and size limits, seasons and certain fishing gear restrictions, to allow people to remove fish killed by the cold weather from the water and the shoreline. This order, which is in effect through February 28, applies only to dead fish, prohibits the consumption and sale of such fish, and exempts persons picking up dead fish from the saltwater fishing license requirements. Many Hot Line callers were concerned about the cleanup of dead fish. No state agency, including FWC, provides cleanup services for natural fish kills. Unless local governments offer this service, the fish are left to decompose naturally.

#### Sea turtles

FWC and staff from federal, state and local agencies along with numerous volunteers conducted a massive rescue effort for sea turtles throughout the state. More than 4,600 sea turtles immobilized by cold water temperatures were collected during the first three weeks of January. The overwhelming majority of turtles were green sea turtles, with smaller numbers [each < 100] of loggerheads, Kemp's ridley and hawksbill turtles. Cold-stunned turtles were taken to various facilities throughout the state for assessment and treatment. The majority (~80%) of the turtles survived; about 948 did not. Approximately 3500 turtles have been released back into the Gulf/Ocean; but another 100 or so are still in rehabilitation.

Rescued or recovered sea turtles include approximately:

- 1,850 from the Panhandle (including about 500 dead), primarily St. Joe Bay
- 100 from the central west coast (Pasco through Lee, including about 25 dead)

- 175 from the Florida Keys (mostly Islamorada through Grassy Key, including about 5 dead)
- 2,500 from Flagler Beach through Stuart on the central east coast (including about 400 dead)

FWC's partners, commercial businesses, and private citizens contributed to this rescue effort, donating their time, materials, vehicles, and vessels. Rescued sea turtles were released back into the wild as quickly as possible. Were it not for the concerned, concentrated effort of so many partners, the mortality rate of these turtles would almost certainly have been 100%.

The long-term implications of this cold event, particularly for green sea turtles, will need to be assessed. This coming year's nesting season is not expected to be affected because only a small fraction of the turtles that died from the cold were of reproductive age, but future consequences are possible.

### Manatees

This year's clear, cold weather significantly improved researchers' ability to count manatees in the annual synoptic survey. Researchers reported a preliminary count of 5,076 manatees statewide, surpassing the previous record high by more than 1,200 animals.

Manatees do not tolerate water temperatures below 70 degrees very well, especially for extended periods of time. Biologists noted unusually large numbers of manatees gathered in the warm-water sites for extended periods of time. FWC researchers, managers and law enforcement officers closely monitored the large numbers of manatees dependent on these sites. Staff monitored warm water discharge conditions at several power plants, rescued distressed animals and removed sediment from the end of a canal that posed a restriction to the movement of manatees gathered there.

Reports of cold stress-related manatee deaths began on January 7 and increased significantly to unprecedented levels, with 288 manatee deaths confirmed [as of February 10, 2010] since the start of the year; of these 175 have been attributed to cold-related stress. In addition, forty eight manatee deaths were verified but bodies were not recoverable for examination; most of these animals also probably died from cold stress. Manatee deaths were highest in Brevard (Cape Canaveral) and Monroe (Keys) Counties, and common in Indian River (Vero Beach), St. Lucie (Ft. Pierce), Collier (Naples), and Lee (Ft. Myers) Counties.

Prior to the January 2010 cold event, the record for both the total number (429) and for watercraft related deaths (97) occurred in 2009. Before that, the record for total mortality was set in 2006 with 417 deaths. The five year average for cold stress mortality is 11, and 50 for total mortality, so we're now well above the five year averages. Staff will be reviewing the data in more detail to determine what additional actions may be taken to address the high mortality.

### Crocodiles

Although a final count has not been determined, Everglades National Park reports 125 crocodiles have been found dead (most likely from cold stress) within the park. One of the victims, tagged as a hatchling in 1986, was about 13 feet long and weighed about 450 pounds. It's estimated that



there are only about 1800 crocodiles in Florida, and the majority are found in Everglades National Park.

#### Cold weather impact on corals

Preliminary evaluations showed significant mortality of nearshore [2 - 2 ½ miles offshore], shallow water corals in the Florida Keys and Biscayne National Park. Water temperatures in mid-50's F were recorded in some patch reef areas. The probability of total colony [and "total ecosystem mortality" mortality decreased as the distance offshore increased. Corals on the fore reef did not appear to have been affected. Coral reefs in the Dry Tortugas were not affected and only a few dead reef fish observed. Species of *Porites* and *Monastrea* appeared to have been most affected by the cold water, showing total colony mortality in the patch reefs. Encrusting octocorals and sponges (rope, vase, barrel and encrusting species) suffered heavy mortalities. The mortality rate for several genera of Gorgonians was estimated at >50%. The corals at the FWRI staghorn coral nursery and many of the parent colonies that supply the nursery appear to be dead. FWRI, Keys Sanctuary, Nature Conservancy and National Park scientists will continue long-term monitoring of sites to gain a better understanding of the extent of coral mortality.

#### Nonnative species

Ultimately, the impacts on the nonnative species should be beneficial to the state. It is difficult to determine the impacts of the cold on these species because of a lack of baseline data. Severe cold snaps will shrink the range of the tropical animals to the southernmost part of the state and hurt the ones that occur there. Preliminary anecdotal material indicates that the green iguana population in South Florida has been severely impacted. Nonnative reptiles (particularly the Burmese python) which survive exposure to the cold, will probably succumb to chronic respiratory (a 50% mortality rate possible) and/or experience decreased reproductive success.

Invasive plant species, such as the Brazilian pepper, Australian pines, and Old World climbing fern, will likely be severely impacted by the cold temperatures and that will hopefully help Central and South Florida land managers in controlling them. In lakes, where temperature extremes are not as drastic, the cold temperatures will likely have little impact in controlling submersed invasive plants like hydrilla. However, floating nonnative plants, such as the South American water hyacinth, will likely experience a significant die-back.

#### Other FWC News

Last year the Florida Legislature established a resident shoreline saltwater fishing license with a fee of \$7.50 and an effective date of August 1. Resident shoreline licenses went on sale July 1, 2009; from July 1 through December 31, 53,820 shoreline licenses were sold. Also, sales of other resident as well as non-resident recreational saltwater fishing licenses during this time period increased by 24%, compared to prior year (2008) sales in these months. 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.

Staff in the artificial reef program participated in a damage assessment dive on the Oriskany off Pensacola in November 2009, nine days after Tropical Storm Ida made landfall in Mobile. The

Oriskany, sunk in May 2006, suffered no major structural damage from the storm. However, they observed a large section of vertical exterior metal sheeting was missing from both the starboard and port sides of the smoke stack. This blown out metal sheeting created an opening approximately 20 feet wide by 50 feet high on both sides of the smoke stack aft of the bridge; divers appear to like this new swim-through passage. Tissue samples from red snapper, vermilion snapper and gray triggerfish were also collected and sent to the Texas A&M lab for PCB analysis; a report is not expected before March 2010.

In April 2009 the University of West Florida included the Oriskany Reef in their fish tagging study; the objective of this tagging effort was to gain some basic information on site fidelity, recapture rates, and release mortality of recreationally targeted reef fish species associated with the Oriskany. A total of 199 reef fish were tagged and released on April 21, 2009, including 113 red snapper and 69 vermilion snapper; anglers were asked to report catches of tagged fish. Of the 113 red snapper tagged, 12 were reported caught – 10 from the Oriskany. Of the 69 vermilion snapper tagged, 2 were reported – both from the Oriskany. Approximately 93% of the recaptures occurred within the first 20 days of the opening of the 2009 recreational red snapper fishing season (June 1 - August 14). The most important aspect of this study as it relates to the PCB analysis is the site fidelity of red snapper and high level of recreational fishing pressure early in the red snapper season. During this study, red snapper were documented to have a high site fidelity rate (83%, i.e., ten of the twelve red snapper recaptures) within the seven month period after release. And all but one of red snapper tag returns were caught within the first twenty days of the 2009 red snapper season. Both vermilion snapper returns also occurred during the first 20 days of red snapper season.

Partnering with Florida Sea Grant, NOAA and the University of Florida IFAS Extension, the FWC co-hosted the 2010 Florida Artificial Reef Summit January 21-23 in Cocoa Beach. The theme for this year's Summit was "Fisheries Management and Artificial Reefs". The first day addressed management issues, day two emphasized issues related to reef development, and day three focused on the importance of citizen involvement in reef development and monitoring. With 33 speakers, 20 poster presentations and over 180 attendees, this year's Summit was deemed a total success. The agenda and abstracts of the presentations at the 2010 Florida Artificial Reef Summit are available on the Florida Sea Grant Web site: [www.flseagrant.org](http://www.flseagrant.org).

Last year the FWC established six regional rotating ten day closures of the blue crab fishery to allow for retrieval of lost or abandoned blue crab traps and any traps left in the water during the fishery closure. Last July and August a total of 3,063 blue crab traps were retrieved in four of the regions by FWC contractors and volunteer groups. In January 2010 Trap retrieval was conducted in the remaining two areas: the St. Johns River system [east coast] and the western Florida Panhandle. Six hundred eighty eight blue crab traps were removed from the St. Johns River system and 277 from waters in the western panhandle.

The Division of Marine Fisheries Management continues to post a "Marine Fisheries Hot Sheet" on their web site at the beginning of each month. The Hot Sheet addresses hot issues and FWC Commission agenda items, with links to important back up documentation. The Hot Sheets may be accessed at: [http://www.myfwc.com/RULESANDREGS/SaltwaterRules\\_HotSheets.htm](http://www.myfwc.com/RULESANDREGS/SaltwaterRules_HotSheets.htm).

Recent Commission regulatory actions affecting Gulf fisheries include:

- Approval of amendments to the Commission's shrimp rules to allow: 1] use of any turtle excluder device certified by NOAA Fisheries in state waters, and 2] use of any bycatch reduction device certified by NOAA Fisheries in state waters. Use of a Florida Finfish Excluder meeting specified criteria is also allowed in inshore and nearshore waters
- Declaration of bonefish as a gamefish to promote public awareness of the importance of this premier sport fish to Florida and a proposal for amending the current bonefish rule to include all species in the Family Albulidae found in Florida, require fish be landed whole, and apply Florida's regulations to bonefish in federal waters.
- Approval of an amendment to the Commission's spiny lobster rule that extends the moratorium on issuance of new commercial dive permits until July 2015, after the evaluation of casitas has been completed and reviewed.
- Prohibiting any harvest of lemon sharks in state waters.

#### Marine Fisheries Data collection

##### Commercial Fisheries

Commercial samplers conducted 1,482 interviews in 2009 of which 1,028 were by Gulf coast samplers (Escambia – Monroe counties). Trip Interviews in 2009 resulted in 48,655 measurements and 14,763 ageing structures entered into TIP of which 36,169 measurements and 12,944 ageing structures. Of the commercial 214,858 trip tickets edited in 2009, 95,736 were submitted on paper whereas 119,122 were submitted electronically. Those trip tickets accounted for 304,745 electronic and 182,781 paper records for species (Total = 487,526). Overall, there was a slight increase in the proportion of electronically submitted tickets and species records. Migration of the Marine Fisheries Information System (MFIS) from Oracle to MS SQL Server is proceeding. Coupled with this move is the migration of the MFIS from its current server in St. Petersburg to a new centrally located server in Tallahassee. MFIS will be the first of FWRI's databases to make the transition.

##### Recreational Fisheries

All recreational angler intercept quotas were met for 2009. A preliminary total of 39,666 angler intercepts were completed in the NOAA Fisheries MRIP/MRFSS, of which 24,953 were from Gulf counties (including Monroe). Totals by mode were 5,581, 5,113 and 14,259 for shore, charter/guide and private/rental boat anglers, respectively. This was the first year in which the numbers of angler intercepts dropped below 40,000 in more than 10 years. Among the reasons for the decline in numbers were regulatory changes to several high profile fisheries and economic impacts to boat mode fisheries which made obtaining interviews a little more difficult than in previous years. The number of angler intercepts during the wave 1, 2010 sampling period (January-February) was impacted by prolonged and persistent cold weather which resulted in water temperatures well below average over most of the state (e.g., 4.6oC in Cedar Key, 5.1oC Apalachicola, 8.9oC in Charlotte Harbor, 7.4oC Tampa Bay) and as you are already

aware, cold-related deaths in large numbers of inshore species. Coupled with the cold weather were frequent wind and high seas advisories that kept even those willing to brave the cold off the water. MRFSS sampling assignment cancellations due to weather during the months of January and February were the highest we have experienced for any wave since the state began MRFSS sampling in 1997. Averages for the numbers of intercepts per completed assignment were also lower than previously recorded for wave 1 sampling.

Recreational and commercial biological sampling resulted in 21,008 biological sample records entered to the Fisheries Dependent database in 2009. More than 10,000 were from the for-hire and recreational fisheries.

FWC wrapped up a NOAA Fisheries funded pilot study of the Highly Migratory Species Fishery in Southeast Florida and the Florida Keys. The study had for-hire and private angler catch and effort components and a telephone survey to characterize the permitted fishery for the entire Gulf of Mexico. Final reports are in the finishing stages and results and recommendations will be presented to the Gulf FIN committee for consideration in the June 2010 meeting.

Two NOAA funded cooperative research projects are under way in the Gulf. The first of which examines aspects of the reproductive biology and ecology of shallow-water snapper species in South Florida and the Florida Keys and the other attempts to obtain improved information on the survival of discarded reef fish species in the recreational fishery using a combination of at-sea observer surveys and mark and recapture methods. Both studies have been ongoing for approximately 7 months and have yielded close to 3,500 tagged fish and approximately 2,000 ageing structures. As part of the mark-recapture study a total of 83 for-hire observer trips were made in the Panhandle and Tampa Bay regions. An additional 3,100 fish were also tagged as part of a red snapper directed study in the Florida panhandle, bringing the total to 5,624 tagged. Tagged species in order of abundance were red grouper (55.4%), red snapper (23.8%), gag (14.2%), gray triggerfish (4.2%) and vermilion snapper (2.4%). To date, 322 tags have been returned.

#### Emergency Disaster Recovery Program

The Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP II) funded web based survey has been running for more than 30 weeks. The program provided eligible Gulf coast charter operators with an online system to record for-hire trip information. Although the system has been praised by users for ease of use, participation has been low. In response to low participation in the online logbook, and the need to get economic assistance to for-hire operators, an at-sea observer sampling program was developed that would allow for-hire vessel operators to be compensated for providing vessel time and space for at-sea samplers from reef fish tagging and discard data collection programs. For-hire operators eligible for participation in the online logbook program will also be eligible to participate in FWC's reef-fish tagging programs. Initial interest by industry in a cooperative tagging component has been encouraging.

## Alabama Report: C. Denson

### Fisheries Section

Work continues on the Little River Bay marsh rehabilitation project located near Bayou La Batre. Funding for this project is provided through the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP). This work is anticipated to be completed in June 2010.

EDRP fisherman assistance programs are anticipated to be concluded by summer of this year.

MRD has continued EDRP oyster recovery projects. Reclassification of upper Mobile Bay has been approved by the Alabama Department of Public Health and U.S. Food and Drug Administration and an oyster relay program is scheduled to begin by the end of March. Oysters will be moved to construct a new oyster reef in lower Mobile Bay.

The ADCNR Commissioner has approved a new oyster management plan which takes a more active approach towards the monitoring of harvest and maintaining productive beds. The plan is tied to legislation which has passed the Alabama House and is scheduled for vote in the Senate.

A SEAMAP winter cruise was completed without incident. MRD is discussing the addition of a fishery-independent vertical line survey with SEAMAP after NMFS indicated a need to address age structure and abundance estimates of reef fishes.

MRD participated in outreach events at the Alabama Coastal Bird Festival and Conservation Expo in Fairhope and the Mobile Boat Show. These events included MRD's interactive "touch tanks". In addition, MRD distributed the 2010 Marine Information calendar and the 2010 Children's Marine Art calendar.

MRD has been working with ADCNR State Lands Division to secure Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) funds for much needed renovation and construction activities within the Division. Plans include the construction of a new laboratory and office facility at Claude Petet Mariculture Center (Gulf Shores) and the renovation of boat basins located at Divisional offices in Gulf Shores and on Dauphin Island.

MRD is working with the Department's Engineering Section and FEMA to repair damages to the Ft. Morgan boat ramp caused by Tropical Storm Ida. A breakwater and finger pier were damaged at this location.

MRD submitted a proposal to NOAA requesting that Alabama be classified as an exempted state under the National Saltwater Angler Registry Program. Alabama has met the initial requirements for exemption status and is currently classified as exempted. An MOU is currently in development between NOAA and Alabama to complete the exemption designation.

Due to increased reports of the Asian tiger shrimp, *Penaeus monodon*, during the last shrimp season, AMRD has attempted to increase public awareness of this exotic species by informing the shrimping community through distribution of fliers that describes the shrimp and their potential impacts to the fishery/ecology.

Fishery-Independent Assessment Monitoring Program (FAMP) samples were collected and processed for biological/hydrographic data at monthly intervals to maintain continuity of the 30 year program. Bi-annual catch reports were submitted to GSMFC.

MRFSS samplers collected 252 shore, 118 charter, and 273 private boat interviews in Wave 6 which exceeded quotas for this period.

MRD responded to reported fish kills resulting from prolonged cold weather events. Affected fish consisted primarily of silver mullet, *Mugil curema*. Extreme cold temperatures were also attributed to several turtle strandings and the death of one manatee and several dolphins.

#### Enforcement Section

The Enforcement Section began using the new Conservation Officer Online Reporting System (COORS) to complete weekly, monthly and fleet maintenance reports. This system has replaced paper reporting for these reports and eliminated duplicate data entry. All cost of maintenance and operations will be tracked more efficiently and reports can be produced in a timely manner.

The Marine Resources Remote Monitoring Program took a large step forward with the placement of four cameras at strategic locations to assist in the monitoring of activity and maritime domain awareness in coastal Alabama. These cameras are the first four of what will eventually be over 20 high quality, thermal and infrared cameras that will be placed all along the Alabama coast. The images are transferred to the internet and are accessible to the officers in the field via laptop computers with cell cards and cellular phones with 3G capability.

The Enforcement Section took delivery of an 8 meter Silver Ships patrol vessel. This vessel was purchased with Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) funds and has been placed in coastal Baldwin County.

#### Mississippi Report: K. Cuevas

##### Enforcement

The Office of Marine Patrol, Marine Law Enforcement activities for October 2009 – February 2010 consisted of 1447 boat patrol hours with 639 contacts which resulted in 34 total citations. These citations mostly consisted of violations concerning red snapper and sharks.

##### Shrimp and Crab Bureau

Mississippi waters north of the Intracoastal Waterway closed for shrimping on January 14, 2010, waters south of the Intracoastal Waterway will close April 30. Despite 2009's latest season opening on record, shrimp landings have increased over 1.7 million pounds from 2008 with 6,368,400 pounds being recorded. These are the second highest landings since Hurricane Katrina. License sales for resident shrimpers have been on a steady decline with 512 sold for 08-09 season, down considerably from over 1000 purchased ten years ago. These low numbers are indicative of the many hardships in the shrimping industry, which this year include poor prices due to cheap imported shrimp, increased operational costs and loss of historical infrastructure support.

The DMR Endangered Species Act Section 6 Agreement Application to NOAA Fisheries was approved to promote better cooperation on the conservation of threatened and endangered marine species.

The 2010 MS Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program was held in late January for waters within a ½ mile from the main shoreline. January 21-27 active traps were moved by owners from the closure area for January 28-30 any trap remaining in the closure area was considered derelict and removed by volunteers. The Mississippi crab trap cleanup program 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. Over 150 volunteers registered and recovered 350 derelict crab traps to be recycled. To date, through the cooperative efforts of all agency partners, volunteers and fishermen, over 18,270 derelict traps have been removed and recycled.

On March 26 the DMR and partners will hold the 5th 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. "Mississippi Artificial Reefs and Reef Fish Studies" will be the subject of the seminar. The previous seminar, "Mississippi Coastal Invasive Species" was held November 2009.

#### Shellfish Bureau

An Oyster Task Force Committee was formed with membership representing various stakeholders in the oyster industry. The goal of the task force is to improve the oyster fishery on the Mississippi Gulf Coast by acting as an advisory capacity to the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. The group has held two meetings thus far and the main focus has been on limited entry issues.

Oyster reef Monitoring and Assessment: The MDMR Shellfish staff is continuing its monitoring efforts by taking one-minute dredge tows on the oyster reefs. The staff also collects weekly water samples in compliance with the National Shellfish Sanitation Program.

Staff conducted a survey of how many fishermen used box or basket dredges vs. the traditional rope or bag dredges. Of the fishermen surveyed, 72 harvesters used basket dredges and 112 used rope dredges. Additionally, the volumes of the catch of the two types of dredges were sampled with no significant differences observed.

Oyster Season: The oyster season has been disrupted by frequent and prolonged closures from rainfall attributed to El-Nino. The season total harvest is approximately 191,000 sacks to date.

Marine Sanitation Device Program: 179 marine sanitation devices have been distributed to Mississippi licensed oyster harvesters as part of the EDRP I Oyster Stewardship Program.

#### Artificial Reef Bureau

There were 5 loads of concrete culverts and 115 Goliath Reef Balls deployed on Mississippi's offshore artificial reefs. EDRP funds were used for both the inshore and offshore reef restorations/enhancements.

In November we deployed a 176 foot menhaden vessel "The Great Wicomico". This vessel was donated by Omega Protein to the Mississippi Artificial Reef Program. Omega Protein shared the cost of cleaning and sinking the vessel with the Mississippi's artificial reef program. EDRP funds were used for the state's share of cleaning and sinking.

The construction of a Key was started in Western Mississippi Sound off of Hancock County. The key is being constructed from the old jail house and local infrastructure. To date approximately 6,000 tons of concrete rubble has been used for the structure. When finished the Key will have three 200 foot sections 4 foot above MLW.

#### 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 attended an American Fisheries Society meeting February 3 – 5. Personnel are working closely with the Coastal Conservation Association to schedule Casting for Conservation kids fishing tournaments for 2010. These tournaments utilize EDRP II public outreach funds.

#### New recreational fishing records for October 2009-February of 2010.

Fly-fishing Tackle:

Southern Flounder 2 lbs. 12.8 oz.

Striped Mullet 4 lbs. 4.77 oz.

#### Coastal Preserves

Coastal Preserves is working with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) on the Mississippi Coastal Improvement Plan (MSCIP). Congress has already appropriated \$439 million to begin work on the ecosystem restoration projects outlined in the MSCIP plan. The barrier islands restoration will be the first of these projects initiated.

Coastal Preserves is also working with the ACE and other partners to find ways to replace the material lost from the Deer Island marsh restoration site during Katrina and bring the site elevation back up to the original project design. A contractor working on a Jackson County dredging project recently added about 30,000 cubic yards to the site. Being able to spread this more consolidated material over the site to achieve the design elevation has been problematic, but we are learning a great deal from this effort. An additional 12,000 marsh plants were planted over this new material and over other bare areas within the site. The Deer Island Marsh Restoration Project has inspired the formation of a Beneficial Use Group (BUG) for coastal Mississippi. This group is still young and developing slowly, but we are getting regular participation from representatives of many different state and federal agencies as well as congressional staff and local groups.

Coastal Preserves outreach accomplishments during this period include a keynote presentation at a seminar on Mississippi Coastal Invasive Species, trained Pearl River Community College botany students on identifying and mapping aquatic invasive species and trained grounds keeping staff at an RV park with salvinia infested ponds on how to identify and treat aquatic invasive species.



During this reporting period, the Coastal Preserves program acquired one parcel totaling 2 acres. The owners of four parcels totaling 526 acres have accepted the state's offer; we are currently working on the options and to resolve title problems on two tracts. Total acreage as of June 30, 2009 is 35,311 acres of State-owned lands managed by the Coastal Preserves Program. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service manages 3,300 acres at Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The National Park Service, Gulf Islands National Seashore manages 6,486 acres within Ship, Horn, and Petit Bois Islands. Collectively this includes more than sixty percent of the 72,000 acres proposed for acquisition in the original 20 coastal preserves. Coastal Preserves applied for a land acquisition grant from the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program to purchase a portion of Cat Island. Our proposal ranked 9th and is likely to receive funding, though the official notices have not yet been sent out.

### **Louisiana Report: K. Foote**

#### **Hurricane Recovery Programs**

##### **Katrina/Rita – EDRP 1**

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. Work continues under all three subgrants agreements: Reseeding, Rehabilitating and Restoring Oyster Reefs (GSMFC Subaward #OR-RRR-020-2006-01); Rehabilitating Oyster Bed and Shrimp Grounds (GSMFC Subaward #OB-SGR-021-2006-01) and Cooperative Research to Monitor Recovery of Gulf Fisheries (GSMFC Subaward #CR-M-022-2006-01).

In the wake of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the Department reprogrammed funds within the EDRP 1 program to increase funding for cooperative research. Surveys of commercial harvesters and wholesale/retail dealers have been developed to help characterize the long-term effects of the hurricanes on their operations. Survey data include information on individual, family and household characteristics, investment costs, percent of indebtedness, size of operation, investment costs, operating costs, handling and storage capacity, perceived problems facing each industry, opinions on various management practices, etc. 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. Holders of a valid 2008 resident wholesale/retail seafood dealer's license and trip ticket-reported purchases valued at \$20,756 (30th percentile) or more during the three-year period 9/1/2005 to 8/31/2008 were eligible to participate in the program. Each qualified resident commercial fisherman who reported sales that were valued at \$5,948 or more (i.e., the 30th percentile) of shrimp, oysters, crabs, saltwater finfish, wild-caught crawfish, or freshwater finfish on LDWF trip tickets during the same time period and who held a valid resident commercial fisherman's license in 2008 was also eligible to participate in the program. The level of compensation is commensurate with the level of participation in Louisiana fisheries; higher level participants are required to provide more and detailed information on their surveys. Application materials were mailed to 4,433 harvesters and 395 dealers; 3,098 harvester and 318 dealer surveys have been mailed to those who have completed their application packages. To-date LDWF has authorized payment for completed surveys to 1,107 harvesters and 143 dealers surveys, and have paid a total of \$5.5 million.

## EDRP 2

(Louisiana Fishing Industry Supplement for Hurricane Recovery – Economic Assistance for Louisiana Commercial and Recreational Fishermen and TED-BRD Compliant Fishermen – GSMFC Subaward # ACF-025-2007-02) projects are continuing. Economic assistance payments are being distributed to eligible Louisiana resident commercial fishers, commercial fishing vessel license holders in specific fisheries, and wholesale/retail seafood dealers who were licensed and had recorded sales or purchases of seafood on LDWF trip tickets during the qualifying period (September 2004 through August 2005). Individual participants were paid commensurate with the level of their participation in Louisiana fisheries; fishers, vessel owners and dealers with the highest value of sales/purchases received more in assistance payment. Charterboat operators who held a resident charter fishing guide license during the qualifying period (License Year 2004 and 2005 through August 2005) were also eligible for equal assistance payments. The initial round of assistance payments were completed in late 2009. Funds remaining after the initial payments have been reallocated and are now being distributed. To-date approximately \$25 million has been distributed under this program. Another major effort under this grant is that LDWF has entered into an agreement with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development to develop two artificial reef sites in the Lake Pontchartrain basin. Bridge rubble from the Hurricane Katrina-damaged I-10 twin spans will be recycled to create these reefs.

## Gustav/Ike

LDWF launched a \$30 million reimbursement program designed to assist the commercial fishing industry following Hurricanes Gustav & Ike. The funds are part of the \$40 million appropriation by U.S. Congress allocated to Louisiana for fisheries disaster assistance to commercial fishing industry under sections 308(b) and 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (16 U.S.C. 4107)(NOAA Grant NA09NMF4520024).

To qualify, licensed resident commercial fisherman and wholesale/retail seafood dealers must have reported sales or purchases of saltwater species on LDWF trip tickets during September 1, 2005 through August 31, 2008 (and received by LDWF by November 30, 2008) and held a 2008 resident Louisiana commercial fishing or wholesale/retail dealer license. Half of the qualifying amount is paid to the applicant up front and the 2nd half of eligible reimbursement is issued after the participant submits acceptable receipts/invoices dated after July 1, 2009 documenting the use of the entire initial payment on eligible items

## Timeline:

- LDWF received grant April 2009
- Packets mailed out Friday June 12, 2009, over 4,000 packets sent out
- First checks mailed out September 8, 2009.
- Over 70% of eligible fisherman/dealers submitted packets to participate
- First batch of 2nd half checks mailed December 14, 2009.
- To date over \$18 million in funds have been distributed.
  - Over 2,500 1st half checks (over \$14 million)
  - Almost 1,000 2nd half checks (almost \$4 million)

## Marine Fisheries Division

### 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. Several inshore artificial reefs in the Lake Pontchartrain and Terrebonne Parish areas were enhanced using limestone (Terrebonne Parish) and reef balls (L. Pontchartrain). Development of additional inshore artificial reefs in Lake Pontchartrain is in the planning stages, using bridge rubble from the hurricane-damaged I-10 bridges.

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 undertaken an ambitious oyster reef rehabilitation effort since 2007 that has included planting approximately 135,000 cubic yards of cultch material at selected locations on the public oyster seed grounds. The first of these reef rehabilitation projects occurred in 2007 and, after two years of growth and development, the 2007 locations in St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes were opened to harvest during the 2009/2010 oyster season. Harvesters quickly realized the success of these rehabilitation efforts as they were able to obtain approximately 64,000 barrels of seed oysters from the 2007 locations. The future value of this harvest once taken to market is estimated at nearly \$5.4 million resulting in a positive benefit-cost analysis. Biological monitoring of the 2008 (one location) and 2009 (five locations) reef rehabilitation projects continues and successful recruitment and growth of oysters has been noted on these locations.

The 2009/2010 oyster season on the public grounds has been far below average as the public grounds continue to show the combined effects of hurricanes and freshets. Low resource availability (except for on the 2007 cultch plants) has severely limited overall landings, yet a recent opening of a previously unavailable area in Lake Borgne provided a much-needed boost to

the industry. This area of unleased state water bottoms was opened to harvest by the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission in November 2009 and field surveys of harvest activity estimated that approximately 120,000 sacks of market-size oysters were taken at a dockside value of approximately \$3 million.

An additional project providing much-needed water bottom information was recently completed in two portions of MS Sound. A side-scan sonar assessment of approximately 54,000 acres of water bottoms has resulted valuable information on parameters such as bottom type, bathymetry, and submerged aquatic vegetation. This information will be utilized by both the shrimp and oyster management programs.

#### Shrimp/Crab

Marine debris removal efforts continue in coastal Louisiana focusing on the shrimp fishing grounds. Four hundred and forty square miles or 110 four-square mile grids of coastal water bottoms in portions of Lake Borgne, Lake Pontchartrain Middle Grounds, Lake St. Catherine, Calcasieu Lake, Vermilion/Cote Blanche Bays and Barataria/Caminada Bays have been cleaned of debris through the Department's contract with Crowder-Gulf Joint Venture. The contractor is currently working on a side scan sonar survey of an additional 120 square miles of water bottoms located within the southeastern portion of Lake Pontchartrain. Once these data have been reviewed, the LDWF will assign the contractor with specific grids to be cleaned. 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.

Governor Jindal created the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force by Executive Order in August, 2009. 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. Ex-officio members include representatives of the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board, LSU Department of Food Science, LSU Sea Grant 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 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.

A new rule expanding the window by which businesses operating under a "Special Live Bait Dealers Permit" may take live shrimp and live croaker during closed shrimp season has been ratified.

The crustacean program has also been assisting the blue crab industry in its efforts to pursue certification as a sustainable fishery under the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). A pre-assessment of the fishery has indicated that the fishery may be a likely candidate for certification

but this process may take some time to complete. Another new rule establishing a 10 day crab trap closure in a portion of the upper Barataria Basin for purposes of removing abandoned crab traps has also been ratified and the closure begins February 27, 2010 in conjunction with the volunteer trap clean-up day.

#### Research and Assessment Division Habitat Management Program

The Habitat Management Program's purpose is participation in federal, state, and local planning and permitting efforts to help conserve, protect, and enhance healthy viable habitat for fish resources. Program activities include review and comment of coastal use permits and consistency applications within the coastal zone, oversight of all permitted activities within the state's public oyster grounds, planning and comment activities associated with the state's coastal restoration activities and with large civil works projects such as hurricane protection levee systems and creation of reservoirs, participation in the interagency advisory panels for the state's two freshwater diversion structures, response and damage assessment activities resulting from unpermitted discharges of oil or hazardous materials, and regulation of seismic exploration activities.

#### Coastal Use Permit Review

In 2009, we reviewed approx. 176 new coastal use permit applications (along with assessments and waivers) within the public oyster seed grounds and approx. 100 habitat projects for a total of approx. 276 projects. We collected \$1,248,671.58 in compensation for impacts to the public oyster seed grounds.

#### Coastal Wetlands

In 2009, the Research and Assessment Division continued to work with state and federal agencies to develop strategies for slowing the rate of coastal wetlands loss in Louisiana. Following hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, the state of Louisiana embarked on a joint coastal planning process that includes both hurricane protection and coastal wetlands restoration. USACE received funding through a series of supplemental appropriations to provide "100 year level flood protection" in the New Orleans vicinity. USACE put forward individual environmental reports in lieu of Environmental Assessments or Environmental Impact Statements to support this goal. Division staff worked to coordinate and review these hurricane reaches and understand their impacts on estuarine and coastal environments. In addition, there were a number of coastal restoration projects moving through the formulation and development process. They include MRGO restoration and the Violet diversion studies, reauthorization studies of the Caernarvon and Davis Pond Freshwater Diversion projects, the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane protection levee, deepening of the Houma Navigation Canal, Donaldsonville to the Gulf hurricane protection levee, planning for the Port of Iberia Channel Deepening Project, the Southwest Louisiana Coastal Plan, the Calcasieu Dredged Material Management Plan, and the Sabine-Neches Waterway plan. Division staff also participated in evaluation of 10 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act projects for Priority lists 18 and 19. Up to four of the 10 projects may be funded annually for engineering and development activities.

#### Caernarvon and Davis Pond Freshwater Diversion Projects

Extensive fisheries resource monitoring programs continued for both the Caernarvon and Davis

Pond Freshwater Diversion Projects. The Caernarvon Project has been operational for 18 years and LDWF personnel have monitored its effects on the fish, wildlife and vegetation populations in the basin throughout its operation. The Davis Pond Project came on-line in July 2002. Ongoing maintenance designed to address problems with flooding in the ponding area north of Lake Cataouatche continued to limit the amount of freshwater diverted through the Davis Pond structure. Research and Assessment Division staff provide input into the operation of both structures.

#### Oil Spills and Hazardous Materials

LDWF's Oil Spill Task Force continued in 2009 to develop and implement plans to protect and restore the state's wildlife, fishery and habitat resources from the adverse effects of oil spills. During this fiscal year, state and federal trustees worked on approximately 20 ongoing oil spill assessment/restoration plans. In addition, the trustees continued to work on developing a way to estimate amounts and impacts of oil spilled as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

LDWF participates with other state and federal agencies in planning restoration of hazardous materials sites. Two planning activities continued in 2009: Bayou Trepagnier in St. Charles Parish and Calcasieu River in Calcasieu Parish.

LDWF also evaluated and responded as needed to approximately 3,000 oil spill notifications which were received from Louisiana State Police. These notifications cover a range of hazardous emissions and chemical spills as well as oil spill related incidents.

#### Seismic Section

The LDWF Seismic Section was created in 1939 specifically to protect oysters, fish, shrimp and other wildlife from the effects of seismic exploration. Seismic exploration uses energy waves to generate a profile of sub-surface reflective layers that help define potential oil and gas traps. The energy waves can be produced by explosives detonated below the ground, by air guns that emit a powerful burst of air just above the surface, or by large vibrating pads placed on the surface. These projects can occur in sensitive wetlands, water bodies and uplands. Seismic agents monitor geophysical companies to protect Louisiana's fish and wildlife resources by ensuring compliance with LDWF seismic rules and regulations. During 2009, the Seismic Section monitored 24 projects throughout the state.

#### Data Management Program

##### Data Management System Upgrades

LDWF issued an RFP in June of 2009 for migration of the existing data management system design and implementation. The LDWF legacy system is over 20 years old and is running on an aging platform. The RFP was developed to assist the Department in cataloging existing data bases, convert all data bases into relational SQL tables and migrate existing SAS code to an updated SAS IT server version that will be able to access the SQL tables.

It is anticipated that a contract will be in place by the end of March and work can begin on the data conversion project. Timeline for the project is 15 months.

### Pilot Voluntary For-hire Reporting System

LDWF contracted with BlueFin data to develop the voluntary for-hire reporting software. The software is computer based and designed to collect information on the number of for-hire anglers, residence of anglers, time fishing, fishing gear, area fished and information on each species caught and the disposition of each species. In an effort to make the software more attractive to the for-hire industry, several additional features were added, such as a calendar feature, additional windows to log expenses and a trip summary window. Only the data effort data will be transmitted to LDWF.

A total of 8 outreach meetings were held across the state to introduce the for-hire captains to the software. These meeting were also an opportunity for the for-hire industry to provide feedback to the Department on additional features or concerns they may have concerning the program. To date 43 for-hire captains have requested and received a free copy of the software. Legislation is being introduced to make reporting mandatory.

### MRFSS Data Collection

Over 6,300 intercepts were collected in the calendar year 2009. A total of 528 intercepts have been collected so far in 2010. Staff continues to review the site register and update as necessary. There are no outstanding issues with sites.

Writing instruments continue to be a minor problem with field surveys. Permanent blue pen is the only ink that routinely scans without issue, but this causes problems with the field staff. We will continue to work with GSMFC on this issue.

We are continuing with the for-hire telephone surveys. The correction factor on charter estimates continues to be high due to the small sample size that results from issues with pre-validation efforts. GSMFC and LDWF are working on identifying those vessels which are causing the most issues and seeing how the issue can be addressed and the correction factor lowered.

### Commercial Landings – Trip Tickets

Landings through scan month September (August data) 2009 have been delivered to the FIN system. Work continues on the remainder of the 2009 trip tickets.

LDWF has improved the design of their trip ticket system by adding the commercial vessel license number to the trip ticket forms. This will provide a clear link to the vessel owner and will help with the validation of vessel numbers. Additional sub-areas have been added to provide more detail on oysters harvested from the public reefs.

LDWF plans on visiting the high volume dealers and retrieving the older paper forms and providing them with the new forms. While on site with those dealers, we will demonstrate the electronic trip ticket reporting software and find out the obstacles that dealers may have with converting to the electronic format.

### FIN Biological Data Collection

There were shortfalls in otolith and length collection for FIN targeted species. Commercial gray snapper, southern flounder and stripped mullet were extremely hard to locate. Gray triggerfish in

both recreational and commercial modes could not be located in the quantities required to meet the quota.

Aging the FIN species continues and is expected to be completed within the next 3 to 4 months.

#### TIPS Data Collection

There continues to be issues with finding interviews with vessels landing finfish east of the river in Plaquemines parish. Only 3 dealers will occasional land reef fish and migratory species. There is also an issue with dealers who refuse to allow field staff to cut fish in order to collect otoliths and to sex the fish. When field staff east of the river cannot collect finfish TIPS, they will conduct effort interviews with shrimp vessels.

TIPS data collection in the central part of the state (Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes) continues without issue.

#### Fisheries Research lab

The Fisheries Research Lab (FRL), located on Grand Isle, has a primary mission to conduct the research required to manage Louisiana's marine, estuarine and freshwater fisheries. The laboratory is made available for the use of other LDWF and non-LDWF entities engaged in fisheries research, management, enforcement, coastal restoration and marine education, and serves as a station for Coastal Study Area III in the Barataria Bay estuarine system. The marine laboratory also supports the monitoring of the Freeport Sulfur Mine Reef for the Louisiana Artificial Reef Program, Elmer's Island WMA, and a local operations center for LDWF Enforcement Agents.

#### Hurricanes of 2008: Gustav and Ike

In the fall of 2008, hurricanes Gustav and Ike forced the evacuation of the lower portions of southern Louisiana. Grand Terre Island sustained a large amount of physical damage, and the facilities of the Lyle S. St. Amant Marine Lab sustained some damage.

During the month of September 2009, lab staff commuted daily for area operations of baseline sampling. The town of Grand Isle and the US National Guard enforced a curfew, and no overnight facilities were available. Power to the Grand Terre facilities was dependent on a diesel generator at the lab.

LDWF rented rooms at the Sand Dollar Marina as soon as they become available, in order to continue operations. After some repair work to the generator on Grand Terre, some lab staff moved back to the Lyle S. St. Amant lab. The facility was solely dependent on a generator for a 24 hour source of energy. Six weeks later the generator malfunctioned, and could no longer be repaired. Lab staff were housed at the Sand Dollar Marina until the end of May 2009.

The month of June 2009, lab staff were housed in the *Ms. Jenna* – a housing barge owned by LDWF. On June 30, 2009, LDWF opened the Fisheries Research Lab on Grand Isle, and staff moved into the new facility.



### Elmer's Island

The State of Louisiana recently acquired Elmer's Island Wildlife Management Area. This property is managed by Fisheries Research Lab employees.

### Davis Pond Monitoring Program

Personnel collect biological and physical data to be used for monitoring the effects of the Davis Pond Water Diversion. These samples include finfish, shellfish, isohaline, creel, and Nestier Tray data.

### Finfish Management

Fisheries Research Lab personnel collect fishery dependent data with the use of Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Surveys (MRFSS), Davis Pond Creel surveys, and otoliths for biostatistical information. Fisheries independent data is collected for coastal species using seines, gill nets, trammel nets and the participation in a coastal fecundity study on Spotted Seatrout.

### Shellfish Management

Fisheries Research Lab personnel conducted trawl samples using sixteen-foot and six-foot trawls. Post larval shrimp are sampled with a plankton net during incoming tide.

### Mollusk Management

Fisheries Research Lab personnel monitor the oyster boats involved in the Public Oyster Lease Recovery (POLR) program, collect oyster fisherman production data in the Boarding Run survey and conduct dredge samples.

### Sea Turtle and Marine Mammal Stranding Program

FRL staff monitor the beaches and marshes in the vicinity of Grand Isle for dead or live stranded dolphins or sea turtles.

### Freeport Sulfur Mine Reef Monitoring

FRL staff monitor the buoys marking the edges of the Freeport Sulfur Mine reef. Twice monthly, biologists check the buoys to make sure buoys are in working order.

### Sportfish Tagging Program

The Fisheries Research Lab participates in the Sportfish Tagging Program, tagging Spotted Seatrout and Red Drum.

### Bay Water Quality Samples

Lab personnel collect weekly water quality data in Bayou Rigaud on the bay-side of Grand Isle. This data is collected to assess areas for oyster production potential.

### Education and Outreach

The Fisheries Research Lab personnel provide samples and educational facilities for the Outreach staff. Lab personnel participate in the WETSHOP program, a "hands-on" environmental program for teachers, and assist the Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences with their summer educational program.

## Texas Report: J. Membretti

### Regulatory Issues

In November, Coastal Fisheries' proposed statewide scoping items were presented to and were approved by the TPWD Commission. Scoping items include reducing the snook minimum size limit from 24 to 22 inches, strengthen the reporting requirements for commercial catches, and splitting the commercial and recreational statewide proclamations into two chapters. The strengthening of the reporting requirements will make it clear who is to report when there are direct sales from a boat to an individual. The splitting of the proclamations will simplify and make it easier to find the provisions in both sections when needed and can also simplify the Texas Register administrative procedure requirements for analysis as compared to when the two items are together.

During the resulting 3 scoping meetings Coastal Fisheries held in mid-January regarding statewide proposals, there was little support for the snook proposal. About 30 anglers spoke against the proposal and only 4 individuals supported the proposal. Additionally, two of the folks who spoke against the proposal represented larger angler groups, the lower Laguna Madre Flyfishing Association and The Snook Foundation. The basic concern coming from anglers who target snook is the potential additional take of common snook.

### Menhaden Total Allowable Catch

The final adjusted estimated pounds of menhaden caught in Texas and landed in Louisiana during the 2009 fishing season totals 14,071,333 pounds. This represents 44.7% of the 31.5 million pound Texas Total Allowable Catch. This is a decrease of 328,977 pounds from the estimated 14,400,310 pounds of menhaden reported on CDFRs. Considering the +10% rule, the 2010 quota should be 34,650,000 pounds.

### Coastal Fisheries Programs and Projects

#### Fish Stocking Efforts

2009 Production Totals

Red Drum = 19,663,126

Spotted Seatrout = 2,762,539

Flounder = 4,335

2010 Production Totals Up-to-date:

Flounder = 8,289 (6,203 in Sabine Lake, 2,086 in Galveston Bay)

#### PRBMFRS Life History Research

Alligator gar otolith and gonad samples were collected from the Cedar Lakes area for a preliminary reproductive biology study.

Gray snapper samples were collected and processed for a life history study.

Red drum otolith collections from gill net samples continued, as was processing and aging of otoliths collected in previous years.

Otolith and finclip samples from red drum were collected and processed for a genetics project conducted by Dr. John Gold, Texas A&M University.

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

Data from a spotted seatrout temperature tolerance study was summarized and a report was produced.

#### PRBMFRS Genetics Research

Southern flounder and alligator gar genetic variation studies are continuing.

A cooperative effort with Texas A&M University at Galveston involving species identification confirmation of snook species collected in Texas waters was continued, additional samples from Mexico were obtained by TAMU-G staff and will be analyzed.

Species identification was conducted on shrimp provided by NOAA law enforcement to determine if truth in labeling regulations were followed by seafood wholesalers.

A project to track oyster disease using QPCR was initiated. Staff members involved in initial sample processing were trained in DNA isolation procedures.

#### Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Project

Preliminary totals from this year's Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Project include 192 volunteers removing 1,374 abandoned crab traps, mostly from San Antonio Bay (591), Aransas Bay (304), and Galveston Bay (276). Since 2002, this project has removed 27,348 traps, including this year's preliminary total.

#### Artificial Reef Project

TPWD has a large working list of potential donations with over 15 active projects. This year, we anticipate 6 or more rig reefings and close to \$1 million in donations.

TPWD should have a US Army Corps of Engineers permit in place by this summer to expand the Vancouver Liberty Ship Reef, off Freeport, from 40 acres to 160 acres. The Coastal Conservation Association has stock-piled numerous concrete culverts for reefing on this site.

In March, Alamo Concrete (Harlingen) will move 1,600 concrete culverts to our reef material storage site for future reefing at the Port Mansfield nearshore reef site within the next year.

Additional materials have been secured at the Sabine Pass storage site for reefing at SALT and Basco's reefs.

TPWD received TxGLO Coastal Impact Assistance Program grant for \$1.5m that will be used for nearshore reef work. New projects will be contracted over the next 3 years.

A new website is being created for the reef program. When it come online this summer, it'll contain an interactive site map and more accurate reporting of updates and projects.

### Buyback Programs

#### Inshore Shrimp Buyback Program

Inshore shrimp buyback round # 25 application period closed on October 15, 2010. During this round, 58 individual bids were received and a total of 32 (17 bay and 15 bait) licenses were purchased at a total cost of \$273,295. The average purchase price was \$8,541.

Shrimp - Overall totals since 1996

- 2,045 licenses purchased
- 1,030 bay licenses and 1,015 bait licenses
- Total cost of \$13.5 million
- $2,045 / 3,231$  original licenses = 63%

#### Crab Buyback Program

Crab buyback round #11 application period closed on October 15, 2009 during which 10 applications were received and 3 licenses were accepted at a total cost of \$27,200 and an average cost of \$9,066.

Crab - Overall totals since 2001

- 45 licenses purchased
- Total cost of \$269,249
- Average price over all rounds = \$5,983
- $45 / 287$  original licenses = 16% of total

#### Finfish Buyback Program

Finfish buyback round #14 application period closed on October 15, 2009 during which 21 applications received and 10 licenses were purchased at a total cost of \$93,800 and an average of \$9,380.

Finfish - Overall totals since 2002

- 214 licenses purchased
- Total cost of \$1,194,450
- Average price over all rounds = \$5,581
- $214 / 549$  original licenses = 39%

### Oysters

Oyster habitat restoration efforts continue. Last fall, approximately 14,000 cubic yards (~18,000 tons) of river rock were planted in East (Galveston) Bay. This area is closed to the public oyster harvest for 2 years in order to enhance restoration efforts.

In January 2010, oyster dredge samples were taken to assess the spat settling success of TPWD's September 2009 cultch planting. Samples within the restored reef showed catch rates of 2,761 for spat (<25mm)/hour and 2,921 small (>25mm to 75mm) oysters/hour. The mean size of small oysters found attached to the planted cultch was 30.7mm, representing a growth rate of 7.7mm per month.

The Texas General Land Office, the agency responsible for managing state lands, including submerged bottoms, has suggested that oyster habitat lost due to sediment deposition from Hurricane Ike will now be available for oil and gas exploration without constraints. Typically, a minimum 500 foot buffer from oyster habitat is recommended for any oil and gas exploration/production operations. Approximately 8,000 acres of oyster habitat was lost due to sedimentation resulting from Hurricane Ike in September 2008.

In December, TPWD received a \$50,000 grant from the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to continue and expand oyster reef restoration in Galveston Bay. Like the first restoration phase, completed in September 2009, Phase 2 will restore at least 2.5 acres of oyster reef habitat. The purpose is to improve recreational fishing in the area and to provide other "ecosystem services" from oyster reefs. The reefs will be located near privately owned piers and in waters currently closed to commercial oyster fishing due to high bacteria counts. The project will seek to enlist local pier owners to act as stewards of the newly created reefs and to grow oysters by hanging mesh bags filled with oyster shells from their piers. These gardened oysters will be deposited on top of the reefs after construction is completed to quickly establish an oyster population. None of the oysters produced by the project will be used for human consumption.

In addition to the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership grant, TPWD also received notification that a \$50,000 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant has been awarded to expand Coastal Fisheries community-based oyster habitat restoration efforts. Matching funds for these two grants are coming from Texas Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Kills and Spills programs.

On 4 December 2009, the Texas Department of State Health Services ordered a recall of all oysters harvested from San Antonio Bay after reports that about a dozen people in North Carolina and South Carolina had become sick with a virus after consuming oysters from San Antonio Bay. Oysters harvested in San Antonio Bay from 16-25 November 2009 were included in the recall.

#### Turtles

In December, TPWD was awarded a \$400,000 grant over a four-year period (\$100,000 per year) to support Kemp's ridley sea turtle conservation in Texas. The money will go to fund beach patrols and programs primarily on Padre Island, including staff salaries, daily monitoring patrols up and down Gulf beaches during the March-August turtle nesting season to collect and protect turtle eggs and manage turtle stranding incidents, staff and volunteer training, and outreach components with stakeholders such as news media and the public. It will also pay for several utility All Terrain Vehicles that are much-needed for beach patrol work. The grant is coming from the Coastal Impact Assistance Program administered by the federal Minerals Management Service, a grant program operated in Texas by the General Land Office.

#### Special Efforts, Studies and Topics

In early December, the TPWD's North Deer Island Project Team was awarded the Coastal America Partnership Award. TPWD was the project lead for this project that protected 1.7 miles of shoreline and restored 9 acres of marsh and nesting upland habitat. The project took nine

years to complete, 24,000 tons of limestone, 30,000 smooth cordgrass plugs, and at least 13 partnering organizations.

On 5 October 2010, red tide, *Karenia brevis*, was confirmed in water samples taken from South Padre Island beaches. By mid-October, discolored water, respiratory irritation, and dead fish were routinely being reported all along the south Texas coast, from Port Aransas down to the Mexico border. The bloom continued to kill fish through the end of the year, with the last report of dead fish coming from Corpus Christi Bay on New Year's Eve. Though final numbers have not been calculated, preliminary results indicate that between 5 and 10 million fish were killed during this red tide event. Though no discolored water or fish kills have been reported since the beginning of this year, low concentrations of red tide persist at a few locations inside Corpus Christi Bay. Because of this red tide, the Texas Department of State Health Services delayed the opening of last fall's oyster season in all of St. Charles, Aransas, Copano, Corpus Christi bays, the Lower Laguna Madre, and South Bay. Also, excessive rainfall delayed the opening of parts of Galveston Bay, Lavaca Bay, San Antonio Bay, Matagorda Bay, and Tres Palacios Bay to commercial oyster harvest.

In mid-February 2010, clouds of dark water were noticed in Rockport Harbor. Samples were collected and the cause of the mahogany-colored water was determined to be the dinoflagellate *Prorocentrum minimum*. The bloom was also seen in Fulton Harbor. *P. minimum* has not been known to be a toxic species in Texas.

In late February 2010, TPWD received reports of discolored water in the lower Laguna Madre and water sample analysis by UT-Pan American confirmed a bloom of *Aureoumbra lagunensis*, the brown tide. The bloom is suspected to be occurring in patches throughout the lower Laguna Madre.

During the 8-10 January 2010 freeze event, impacts on natural resources were minimal as compared to some of the more significant past freezes in 1983 and 1989. The mid-coast and lower coast were most impacted with stunned or killed striped mullet, various drum species (spotted seatrout, sand seatrout, black drum, red drum, and silver perch), gray snapper, spadefish, striped burrfish, blue crabs, and sea turtles. The largest impact to game fish was to spotted seatrout in the San Antonio Bay area and gray snapper in the lower Laguna Madre. Water temperatures in San Antonio Bay areas were as low as 36 degrees F and 42 degrees F in the Laguna Madre. Coastal fisheries and law enforcement staff collected stunned sea turtles and took them to Sea Turtles, Inc. and the Texas State Aquarium for recovery. Of the almost 425 sea turtles picked up, 153 were alive. These were all green sea turtles except for two loggerhead turtles.

#### 'Others'

On 1 February 2010, Robin Riechers began his new position as the new Coastal Fisheries Division Director. Robin has worked for TPWD since 1988 in various capacities, most recently as Director of the Division's Science and Policy Branch.

On 23 Jan 2010, the 807-ft tanker vessel Eagle Otome collided with the tug Dixie Vengeance near the Sabine Channel in Port Arthur, Texas. The US Coast Guard estimated 10,000 barrels (420,000 gallons) of crude oil spilled from the EAGLE OTOME. Skimming operations were underway soon after the accident, and almost all recoverable oil was picked up by the end of January. Remaining material quickly weathered and broke down. Although some oil entered into Keith Lake and the J. D. Murphree WMA, high tides re-floated and remove much of the shoreline surface oiling. No fish or turtle impacts were noted, but 7 oiled birds were captured, rehabilitated, and released, while 2 birds were recovered dead. This was the largest oil spill in Texas since 1994.

In January 2010, TPWD staff attended a meeting of the Guadalupe-San Antonio and the Trinity-San Jacinto Basin and Bay Area Stakeholder Committees, where members heard presentations from their appointed science team about freshwater inflow recommendations. Other bay-basin committees are also working on the Nueces, Sabine/Neches, and Colorado/Lavaca systems. These committees stem from Senate Bill 3 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007, which established a comprehensive, statewide process to protect environmental flows. The hoped-for outcome is protected environmental flow regimes to help ensure healthy rivers and estuaries.

A featured video on TPWD's YouTube channel is "When Plants Attack," a cautionary story about invasive species threatening Texas. The department's YouTube channel is one of four "social media" outlets TPWD is currently piloting, the others being 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

##### Recreational:

The following recreational landings and percentages are based only on the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey for January through August 2009, and do not include headboat or Texas landings for 2009.

##### Red Snapper:

Federal waters opened June 1 and closed August 15, 2009. Through August, 3.581 million pounds (mp) were landed of the 2.45 mp quota (146 percent). NOAA Fisheries Service will take these landings into account to project when the quota will be filled and the fishery may close in 2010. For 2010, the fishery will open on June 1; NOAA Fisheries Service intends to announce in April the projections for when the quota is expected to be filled and the fishery closed.

##### King Mackerel:

2.406 mp whole weight of the 6.94 mp allocation (35 percent) had been landed through August.

#### Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish:

Through August, 1,414 mp of the 1,368 mp greater amberjack quota (103 percent) had been landed. The fishery was closed on October 24, 2009. For gray triggerfish, 319,347 pounds (lb), or 90 percent of the 356,000 lb catch target had been landed. Given there were four more months in 2009 after the last reported landings, the gray triggerfish quota may have been exceeded by the end of the fishing year. Accountability measures to adjust quota and catch target overruns include shortened seasons the following year. NOAA Fisheries Service will announce any projected shortened seasons early in 2010.

#### Gag and Red Grouper:

For gag, 1,036 mp (50 percent) of 2.06 mp catch target, had been landed through August. For red grouper, 0,787 mp (43 percent) of 1.82 mp catch target had been landed. NOAA Fisheries Service does not anticipate these catch targets or the slightly higher catch limits, which would trigger accountability measures, will be exceeded. Recreational fishing for gag, black, and red groupers is closed February 1 through March 31 in 2010.

#### Commercial:

*Note: Commercial landings are updated twice a month on the Southeast Regional Office's (SERO) Web site. The grouper-tilefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) initiated on January 1, 2010, and is now integrated with the red snapper IFQ. Up-to-date landings can be tracked on the SERO's ReefFish IFQ Web page at <https://ifg.sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/ifgl/>.*

#### Red Snapper:

For 2009, allocations were issued to 524 accounts. For the year, 2,2374 mp gutted weight was landed of the 2,297 mp gutted weight quota (97 percent).

#### 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 was met and the fishery was closed on September 12, 2009. The northern sub-zone of the eastern Gulf of Mexico closed October 24, 2010. Beginning November 1, the boundary between the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic groups of king mackerel shifted from the southwest coast of Florida to the northeast coast of Florida, thus creating the Florida east coast sub-zone for Gulf migratory king mackerel. NOAA Fisheries Service projected the quota for the Florida east coast sub-zone would be met on February 4, 2010, and closed the fishery on that date. Bad weather precluded the fishery from meeting the quota. The fishery will be re-opened in the near future to allow harvest of the remaining quota. The eastern Gulf of Mexico southern sub-zone gillnet fishery opened on January 19, 2010, and closed on January 23, 2010. NOAA Fisheries Service projected the quota for the Florida east coast zone would be filled and closed the fishery on February 4, 2010; due to weather issues, the quota was not met and the fishery will reopen for five days beginning March 3, 2010. The southern sub-zone hook-and-line fishery closed February 15, 2010.

#### Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish:

In 2009, 113 percent of the greater amberjack quota and 56 percent of the gray triggerfish quota was landed. The commercial greater amberjack fishery was closed on November 7, 2009. See Amendment Status below, which addresses how accountability measures will be implemented in



2010 to adjust for quota overages. A closure of the commercial greater amberjack fishery will be in effect from March 1 through May 31, 2010.

Shallow-Water Grouper (SWG):

During 2009, 55 percent of the 7.48 mp SWG quota was landed; 57 percent of the 5.75 mp red grouper quota was landed; and 43 percent of the 1.32 mp gag quota was 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. This rule was replaced on October 16, 2009, by a rule prohibiting bottom longlining for reef fish inshore of a line approximating the 35-fathom contour, until regulations proposed in Amendment 31 (see Amendment Status below) can be implemented. With the implementation of the grouper-tilefish IFQ, closures and quota overruns are no longer expected.

Deepwater Grouper (DWG) and Tilefish:

The 440,000 lb commercial quota for tilefish was met on May 15, 2009, 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. With the implementation of the grouper-tilefish IFQ, closures and quota overruns are no longer expected.

Shrimp:

At its February 2010 meeting, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) voted to continue closing federal waters off Texas to all shrimping during the time period Texas closes state waters. NOAA Fisheries Service will announce the closure in early May after Texas determines the start date for its state-water closure; the closure normally occurs May 15 through July 15.

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 February 19, 2010:

- 1,554 moratorium Gulf shrimp permits and 280 royal red shrimp endorsements
- 1,267 for-hire coastal pelagic moratorium permits; 38 historical captain permits
- 1,450 commercial king mackerel moratorium permits (includes South Atlantic)  
(21 commercial king mackerel gillnet)
- 1,583 commercial Spanish mackerel permits (includes South Atlantic)
- 1,240 for-hire reef fish moratorium permits; 37 historical captain permits
- 907 commercial reef fish moratorium permits
- 173 commercial spiny lobster permits and 334 tailing permits (includes South Atlantic)

Amendment Status

Reef Fish Amendment 29/Red Snapper IFQ Supplemental Rule:

NOAA Fisheries Service implemented an IFQ program for grouper and tilefish on January 1, 2010. NOAA Fisheries Service published a supplemental rule on December 10, 2009, to remove the trip limit restrictions for the various grouper components of the fishery, to clarify landing location criteria, to define "offloading," and to request comment on two Council suggestions for

future IFQ modifications, as well as to integrate the red snapper IFQ program into a single program. The comment period on the proposed changes ended January 11, 2010. A final rule is under review and is expected to publish soon.

#### 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. The Council approved the amendment for review by the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) at its August 2009 meeting. NOAA Fisheries Service published a rule establishing an area closure for bottom longlines in the eastern Gulf of Mexico under the authority of the Endangered Species Act on October 16, 2009. This rule will remain in effect until Amendment 31 is implemented. On December 31, 2009, NOAA Fisheries Service announced the availability of Amendment 31 for public review and comment. On January 15, 2010, the proposed rule published. Both comment periods will end on March 1, 2010, and the Secretary must approve, disapprove, or partially approve the amendment by March 31, 2010. If approved, NOAA Fisheries Service expects to publish a final rule in mid-April, 2010, effective in mid-May.

#### Red Snapper Regulatory Amendment:

Based on a 2009 stock assessment update, the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommended setting the overfishing level (OFL) for red snapper for 2010 at 9.26 mp. To account for scientific uncertainty, the SSC recommended an allowable biological catch that was 75 percent of the OFL, or 6.945 mp. Based on these recommendations, the Council approved an action in the regulatory amendment to adjust the current 5.0 mp total allowable catch to the recommended 6.945 mp. This will lead to rulemaking to increase the commercial and recreational quotas to 3.542 and 3.403 mp, respectively. NOAA Fisheries Service intends to make these changes effective prior to the June 1 start of the recreational fishing season, and to consider this recreational quota increase in its projections of when the quota will be met and the fishery closed. Those projections will occur simultaneously to publication of the final rule adjusting the quotas.

#### Greater Amberjack Quota Adjustment:

During 2009, both the recreational and commercial sectors overran their respective quotas. Current accountability measures require NOAA Fisheries Service to reduce the commercial quota for 2010 to account for the overage, and close the fishery when the adjusted quota is met. For the recreational fishery, the accountability measure requires NOAA Fisheries Service to consider and account for the overage in projecting the length of the next fishing season. The current fishing season begins January 1; in 2009, the recreational fishery met its quota by August. Preliminary estimates for the 2010 season indicate the fishery may reach its quota, accounting for the overage, in July. Because of the impacts on this type of shortened season, the Council voted to begin a framework action to consider alternative fishing seasons for greater amberjack.

### King and Spanish Mackerel Control Dates:

The Council voted at its February 2010 meeting to revise its control dates for the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries. The Council selected control dates of June 30, 2009, and March 31, 2010, for king and Spanish mackerel, respectively. These actions were taken to notify fishermen the Council may use these control dates as they begin consideration of a possible catch share program for these fisheries. NOAA Fisheries Service will announce these new control dates in the Federal Register soon.

### Protected Resources

#### Biological Opinions

- Completed a Biological Opinion for the “Continued Authorization of Fishing under the Fishery Management Plan for the Stone Crab Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico.”
- Completed a Biological Opinion for the “Continued Authorization of Fishing under the Fishery Management Plan for Spiny Lobster in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.”
- Completed a Biological Opinion for the Mobile District Corps of Engineers (COE) for “Funding and Permitting the Reconstruction and Operation of the City of Biloxi Coliseum Pier, Harrison County, Mississippi,” and its effect on Gulf Sturgeon, Gulf Sturgeon Critical Habitat, Smalltooth Sawfish and Sea Turtles.
- Completed a Biological Opinion for the Jacksonville District COE for “Construction of an Extension to, and Continued Operation of, the City of Mexico Beach Fishing Pier, Bay County, Florida,” and its effects on Gulf Sturgeon, Gulf Sturgeon Critical Habitat, Smalltooth Sawfish and Sea Turtles.
- Completed a Biological Opinion for the Jacksonville District COE for “Replacement and Extension of the M.B. Miller Fishing Pier, Bay County, Florida,” and its effects on Gulf Sturgeon, Gulf Sturgeon Critical Habitat, Smalltooth Sawfish and Sea Turtles.
- Completed a Biological Opinion for the Mobile District COE for the “Ten-Year Authorization for Maintenance Dredging of East Pass, Destin, Florida,” and its impacts on Gulf Sturgeon Critical Habitat.
- Completed a Biological Opinion for the New Orleans District COE for “Installation of two Breakwaters in Lake Pontchartrain Providing 100-Year-Level Storm Protection for the City of New Orleans and Jefferson Parish,” and its effects on Gulf Sturgeon Critical Habitat.
- Completed a Biological Opinion for the “Continued Authorization of Reef Fish Fishing under the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan, including Amendment 31, and a Rulemaking to Reduce Sea Turtle Bycatch in the Eastern Gulf Bottom Longline Component of the Fishery.”

#### Conservation Measures

- Completed the new Mississippi Department of Natural Resources’ Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 6 Cooperative Agreement.
- Completed the new Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries’ ESA Section 6 Cooperative Agreement.
- Completed the new Texas Department of Natural Resources’ ESA Section 6 Cooperative Agreement.
- Renewed and amended the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s ESA Section 6 Cooperative Agreement to add elkhorn and staghorn corals.

- Finalized temporary rule to reduce bycatch of sea turtles in the bottom longline component of the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery.
- Completed the Gulf Sturgeon Five-Year Review.
- Issued several authorizations to fish with a modified Georgia Jumper Turtle Excluder Device to test a method of improving shrimp retention efficiency in waters off northeast Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina.
- Provided comments on the “proposed changes to the 2010 Marine Mammal Protection Act List of Fisheries” in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Solicited input and recommendations from the Gulf States for the “ESA Sea Turtle Observer Rule Annual Determination.”
- During early January 2010, a massive sea turtle cold-stunning event occurred as a result of an unusually severe, long, and widespread cold snap. Along Florida beaches over 4500 sea turtles were found stranded as a result. Along the Gulf Coast of Florida, the majority of the strandings occurred at panhandle beaches, with a total of 1,809 turtles found. Over 95 percent (1725) of the turtles found along the Florida Gulf coast were green turtles, with the remaining consisting of Kemp’s ridley and loggerhead sea turtles. The majority (around 70 percent) were found alive and were rehabilitated and released. There were also reports of strandings along other Gulf states, with Texas having the most significant numbers outside of Florida (425, about 2/3 of them dead).

#### Outreach Activities

- Registered approximately 5,752 fishermen under the Marine Mammal Authorization Program.
- Began planning Dolphin SMART program implementation along the central, southwest coast of Florida in 2010; and continued implementation of the program in Key West, Florida and Orange Beach, Alabama. There are currently four tour businesses recognized as Dolphin SMART.
- Maintained a NOAA booth at the Shrimp Festival in Orange Beach, AL and provided wild dolphin conservation information to attendees.
- Mailed educational packets to all commercial tour operators and water-related businesses along the central west coast of Florida and in Puerto Rico to remind them of the Marine Mammal Protection Act’s implementing regulations preventing feeding and harassment of wild dolphins, as well as providing responsible viewing and advertising information and associated outreach materials.
- Debuted web site hosting animated video showing a dolphin addicted to being illegal fed by humans, and initiated distribution of the video to use as an innovative educational tool conveying the harm illegal feeding causes dolphins, as well as how the public can help.
- Conducted a workshop in Alabama for law enforcement personnel to discuss the harm from illegally feeding and harassing wild dolphins.
- Renewed several Stranding Agreements authorizing participation in the National Marine Fisheries Service Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, Southeast Region Stranding Network.
- Developed and designed an outreach brochure to inform the public on what to do in the event of a marine mammal stranding.

- Developed two outreach products for recreational anglers featuring NOAA Fisheries Service's "Dolphin Friendly Fishing and Viewing Tips" and pertinent hotline numbers to help anglers avoid interactions with dolphins while fishing.

*With no further business to discuss; J. Shepard adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.*

**EMERGENCY DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAM (EDRP)  
MINUTES – 60th Annual Spring Meeting  
Tuesday, March 9, 2010  
Orange Beach, Alabama**

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  
Richard Cody, FWC-FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Mark Berrigan, FLDOACS, Tallahassee, FL  
Vernon Minton, *GSMFC Commissioner*, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL

**Others**

Ellie Roche, NOAA-NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL  
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
David Lavergne, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Ebenezer Ogunyinka, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Mike Pursley, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Jason Ballard, 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  
Joe Ferrer, 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 October 13, 2009 held in Biloxi, Mississippi were presented for approval. *There being no further changes to the minutes a motion was made by Jim Hanifen and seconded by Lance Robinson and the minutes were approved as submitted.*

## Introduction and Purpose

Special recognition was given to **Ellie Roche** who 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 62 percent of its budget while the timeline for the grant was at approximately the 70% point. Note was made that spending through January 2010 was nearly \$79 million which reflected improved spending rates over the previous report; but it was pointed out that in order to remain on schedule, spending would have to average \$2.6 million per month over the remaining 18 months. 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 remained 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 \$37.49 million. It was further noted that with Louisiana now actively involved in its Cooperative Research component, spending over the next few months should reflect a marked increase.

With reference to EDRP II spending, **Hode** indicated that Gulf wide reimbursements continued to be ahead of the grant timeline. Program coordinators and principal investigators were commended for having distributed nearly 69.7 percent of the \$85 million appropriated for economic assistance to the Gulf fishing industry during the first 27 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. **Hode** reported that the required 2 percent amounted to nearly \$1.7 million and that spending through January 2010 had amounted to \$1.53 million or about 90 percent of the target milestone. This milestone was expected to be met within the next 45 days as Louisiana was currently making a second round of distributions under the TED component. 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 \$24.

## Overview of Projects

### 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 2009 and that approximately a dozen had been returned as un-claimed. The Department has since resent the checks to forwarding addresses via regular mail this time, noting that some recipients simply refused certified mail. She noted that the sub award had been amended to extend the time of the award in order to continue trying to distribute the un-spent funds. A total of 386 checks have been sent out at approximately \$103 per recipient.

**Dr. Vail** also reported on Dr. Steve Geiger's Oyster Dispersal modeling project in Pensacola Bay under EDRP I. The project is slowly moving forward with a contract with Old Dominion University being developed to aid in predicting the dispersal of larval. They are also looking at mapping larval distribution and are taking plankton samples from the Bay for DNA analysis. Early samples indicated about 12 % false positive oyster DNA presence, 30% with confirmed oyster DNA and about 30% unclear. Sampling and analysis continues.

**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 and only 29 are actually reporting. **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. **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. Additionally, the Department is examining tagging, additional at sea verification and possibly a reef fish survey to complement the log book project.

**Mark Berrigan** reported on the Florida Department of Agriculture oyster restoration program indicating that both EDRP I and II are complimentary in that both are geared to restoring the States oyster reefs. Berrigan reported that restoration work is now ongoing in Santa Rosa County, Bay County, Franklin County and Levy County. He indicated that with the new larger barge in place, the Department has been able to conduct cultch plant operations throughout most of the winter. The barge is capable of handling up to 1000 cubic yards of cultch materials and it takes approximately four hours unload.

In addition, the Department is working with lease holders to resurvey leases and to replenish the water bottoms with new cultch material. A number of small contracts are also in place to aid in the restoration process including the Cedar Key Oystermen's Association for collection of clam shell from mariculture operations and planting in Waccasassa Bay; there is also a contract in



place with a small contractor for the replacement of shell in St Vincent Sound in shallow areas where the larger barge cannot reach; and, one with the Apalachicola Bay Seafood Dealers Association for the purchase of processed shell to be used for cultch. The Department also has a contract with the Franklin County Seafood Workers Association for relaying oysters; another with the Franklin County Board of Commissioners to provide assistance to fishermen by employing them to assist in the restoration process; and with Gulf Coast Aggregates, Inc. for the mining and delivery of fossilized reef shell. Additionally, there is a joint effort contract with Franklin County Board of Commissioners in which the county is acquiring previously owned private sites and FDACS is contracting with qualified agencies/vendors to make improvements suitable to foster use by area fishermen on the east side of Apalachicola Bay.

**Berrigan** also spoke on the Department's ongoing effort to reach agreement with the State's Permitting Section for the completion of the Scipio Creek barge mooring and loading area in the City of Apalachicola. Currently the Department is staging its shell loading in the commercial harbor. Once the loading area has been secured the Department will restore its loading site and assist in upgrading the Apalachicola Marina.

**Berrigan** reported that about 1/3 of the oyster planting on public grounds and approximately one fourth of the work on leased grounds is complete to date. He further indicated that both EDRP I and II are now moving ahead very well and complemented the Disaster Recovery Program for being both timely and economically beneficial to area fishermen who have been severely impacted due to recent area closures.

## **ALABAMA**

**Vernon Minton** gave a brief report on the State's Gill Net buyout program implemented in part under the EDRP II Assistance to Business component. He also commented on the oyster relay which is scheduled to start this month utilizing displaced oystermen to harvest live oysters which will be barged to areas totaling about 800 acres. These areas are reportedly less susceptible to saltwater inflows and damaging oyster drills. The Department will be utilizing marine enforcement personnel to oversee the relays to make sure that harvested products are not diverted.

**Minton** also commented on the condition of the State's reefs noting that they have been closed because of drill damage as a result of drought conditions in the past. He noted that the Department is in the rebuilding process and will be utilizing fishermen to collect data on drill populations and locations and to monitor oyster spat settlement and growth. Based on data gathered through this process, reefs less likely to be impacted by drought conditions will be reconditioned. Oystermen who were unable to participate in Cooperative Research trip reporting due to the closures are being utilized to collect samples for the analysis.

**Kevin Anson** reported on the Habitat component in which a shoreline restoration project is underway in the Little Bay area. Approximately 4500 linear feet of rip rap stabilization materials are being installed - including the installation of wave attenuators to assure adequate

tidal flow. Select areas behind the rip-rap will be back-filled and planted with marine grasses. It is estimate that this project will be completed by the end of June 2010.

Additionally **Anson** reported on the finfish egg and larval study which has been on-going with the Dauphine Island Sea Lab. A meeting is being scheduled for March 23 to receive preliminary findings.

With some exceptions, the trip report program funded under EDRP I through the Cooperative Research component is essentially completed in both commercial and recreational fisheries and data sheets are being analyzed.

Additionally it was reported that the seawater intake system for the Claude Peteet Mariculture Center has been completed and is currently functional. Anson indicated that buildings destroyed or severely damaged at the Center are being re-built through the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) and that equipment replacement needs are being met through the Cooperative Research component of EDRP I and Indirect Assistance to Fishermen component of EDRP II.

Under the Assistance to Business component of EDRP II the Seafood Waste Processing Facility in Bayou La Batre is beginning to move forward now that the Farmers Market Authority has received a grant from the State's Economic Development Administration. The EDA grant will be used for the construction of the replacement building which will be a first of its kind in the area in that it will be "Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design" (LEED) certified. Land has been cleared and the foundation construction is under way. EDRP II funds will be utilized in the acquisition of replacement and updated processing equipment.

**Anson** also reported on five remotely operated cameras along with related software and hardware that have been installed under the EDRP II sub award at key locations along Alabama's coastal area. These systems are functional and are being operated and monitored by area law enforcement agencies.

Additionally, it was reported that Dr. Bob Shipp of the University of Alabama continues with a contract to examine the ecology of artificial reefs for red snapper and other reef fish off Alabama's coast.

**Dale Diaz** of MDMR inquired as to whether the breach in Dauphin Island contributed to the impact on the state's oyster inventory. Vernon Minton verified that the breach did impact the oyster grounds but could not quantify the extent. It was also noted that the upcoming oyster relay would draw from oyster reefs that were conditionally closed and would relocate them into other areas of the Mobile Bay that were less impacted by high salinities. The object was to create a source for harvest in the event there was another drought. It was estimated that it would be about a year before the drought impacted reefs could be opened.

## MISSISSIPPI

**Dale Diaz** complemented GSMFC and NMFS for their management and handling of the Disaster Recovery program. He noted that when the program was started the states had just a short time to develop statements of work and plans – and that both NMFS and GSMFS have worked closely with the states to modify and adjust work plans so as to better accomplish those jobs that were needed the most.

**Diaz** reported on Mississippi's Jobs Training Program under EDRP II noting that the goal is to transfer technology through USM's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory that will provide alternative marine employment opportunities to fishermen who lost jobs because of the storms of 2005. Training involves hands on classes in aquaculture for bait crabs, soft shell crabs and net repairs. Thus far a total of 52 participants have completed training through 6 workshops. The program is free and is expected to be offered again in 2010. Feedback from participants is being encouraged so as to improve class training and identify additional training needs.

**Diaz** also gave a report on the oyster stewardship program which is designed to encourage fishermen to conduct non-regulatory activities that enhance the oyster resources. The program offers education on how to safely handle oysters on board the vessel and is making free sanitation devices available to oyster fishermen. A total of 200 such devices were budgeted and thus far 179 have been distributed to licensed fishermen. A newsletter has also been created through the stewardship program which highlights accomplishments in the industry and provides educational advice, discusses upcoming activities, such as plans for a summer Vibrio education program, and explains new regulations as they are passed.

**Diaz** revealed that the State had completed a fall 2009 cultch plant in which 23,000 cubic yards of sized limestone had been distributed over 500 acres on the Pass Marianne reef. Another planting is scheduled to be conducted in June of 2010.

MDMR's Artificial Reef Bureau has been actively restoring off shore and near shore reefs that were damaged or destroyed during the disaster of 2005. According to **Diaz**, approximately 90 percent of the State's off shore reefs were lost to subsidence during the storms; but since the resource recovery effort began in 2006 approximately 65 percent have been restored. It was noted that since the last disaster workshop report (October 2009) three steel hull vessels, including the 176 foot Omega Protein vessel "Wicomico", have been placed in approved fish havens off the Mississippi Coast.

A total of 93 deployments have been made to date; and the Department indicated that 230 Goliath reef balls and 540 bay balls will be deployed in the spring of 2010. **Diaz** noted also that 100 percent of planned inshore reefs have restored but that the Department continues to look for other needs in inshore reef revitalization since the not only provide access for nearshore fishermen but also encourage further oyster and other marine organism growth. **Diaz** indicated that the work could not have been accomplished in the absence of Disaster Recovery program.

A report was given on the Aquatic Invasive Species program under way through the EDRP I program by Mike Pursley, one of two MDMR staff members dedicated to the identification and

treatment of AIS found in Mississippi waters. **Pursley** gave a PowerPoint presentation which distinguished between invasive, alien, and native species; and reported on some of the work the Department has been able to accomplish to date.

## LOUISIANA

**Jim Hanifen** provided a report on Louisiana activities under the Disaster Recovery program. It was reported that for all intents and purposes the Private Oyster Lease Restoration (POLR) program was completed on December 31, 2009; although some invoices for approved lease work continue to be received and reviewed for payment.

Public oyster ground cultch planting has also been completed. **Hanifen** reported that the only remaining component under the Oyster sub award is completion of the lease data management system. Final design of the data base and interfaces are complete and scanning of the maps and data basing of the records (estimated at nearly one million) is beginning.

Subsequent comments during the course of the workshop discussions revealed that LDWF estimates of seed oysters harvested as a result of disaster restoration efforts were approaching 800 thousand barrels; and, that all of these were transplanted into leased grounds for seeding and grow out purposes.

Under the habitat component, **Hanifen** indicated that the Department is continuing to work with its debris removal contractor, Crowder Gulf, to identify and remove debris from areas where FEMA is not authorized to work – I.e., normally inland waterways. Crowder Gulf remains under contract for this work and is currently in the process of surveying approximately 160 square miles of water bottom in southeast Lake Pontchartrain for remaining debris.

Other projects on which reports were given concerned the engineered oyster reefs and habitat protection areas in selected coastal areas of the State. It was noted that this work is ongoing but had been delayed primarily due to poor weather over the winter and the inability to get materials to work sites. As a result, the construction contracts have been extended to cover weather related lost time.

**Hanifen** reported that the Department is continuing to equip the State's new research lab which was opened in June of 2009 in Grand Isle. Program coordinators and other marine personnel hope to expand the capabilities of the lab by the hosting associated workshops and conferences when they can be arranged so as to not conflict with ongoing educational programs.

Regarding the Cooperative Research component, **Hanifen** reported that the LDWF has been requested to identify possible Disaster funds that can be utilized in support of the Gulf Alliance; and to consider re-programming additional funds to facilitate a small business incubator aimed at providing local sources for "menhaden for bait" that would be used by commercial crabbers and crawfish growers and for recreational fishermen. According to **Hanifen**, if this becomes a reality funds will likely be re-allocated from the habitat program to a cooperative research job.

It was reported that a Gulf wide charter boat for hire survey is being conducted collaboratively with LSU and the Louisiana Sea Grant Consortium in order to update previous surveys and to collect additional and more detailed information. The Cooperative Research component of EDRP will be a part of this effort as it contributes a portion of the funds required to reimburse fishermen who participate in the survey.

**Hanifen** also gave a status report on the Economic Seafood Dealers survey which was instituted under the Cooperative Research component when FEMA assumed the marine debris removal responsibility and portions the Habitat fund balances were re-allocated to Cooperative Research. Reimbursements were established on a tiered basis tied to the value that the industry contributes to the overall State marine economy. Fishermen at the highest tiers are eligible to receive up to \$4000 for completed survey forms; and dealers at the highest tiers are eligible for up to \$40,000 for completed surveys. The intent is to collect detailed information on the effects the storms have had on the seafood business community in south Louisiana.

The report indicated that the universe for this study is approximately 4400 Louisiana fishermen and 400 dealers. **Hanifen** reported very good participation to date with about 71 % of the fishermen that are eligible participating and about 80% of the eligible dealers participating. Of the 3100 fishermen surveys sent out there were 2600 responses; of which 2500 passed the first review. Thirteen hundred of these had been deemed complete and payments totaling nearly \$3.0M had been mailed out under this element as of the report date.

Of the 395 surveys sent out to Louisiana dealers, 318 have been returned and 266 passed the first review. Of these 148 had been deemed complete and payments totaling nearly \$3.2M had been mailed out.

**Hanifen** indicated that the data is being analyzed by David Lavergne and staff in the LDWF Economics Division as it is received.

Under the EDRP II sub award, **Hanifen** indicated that the first round of distributions through the Assistance to Fishermen component had been completed for fishermen, dealers, and wholesalers; and a second round is currently being worked. Distributions in both rounds were based on the value of fishery in the State; however, fishermen were not eligible for "base payments" during the second round of payments. Second round payments consisted of those funds remaining from the first round by category and varied depending on the amount of participation that occurred in each category during the first round. For example if a fisherman in the finfish category was qualified as a tier one recipient during the first round, he might only receive as little as \$7 during the second round. But, if one were an oysterman who qualified at the highest level during the first round, he might get as much as \$830 during the second round.

The TED/BRD component, which required that 2% of the combined funds appropriated to the State of Louisiana be set aside for additional payments to fishermen found to be compliant with TED and other by-catch regulations, was reported to be in a second round funding cycle. The second round consists of the balance funds not applied for in the first round. They are being distributed to those who applied and met certification criteria in the first round. Hanifen reported that initial payments of \$530 each went out to 1132 fishermen who had records of trawl caught

shrimp. The second round is expected to have approximately \$250K that will be distributed to those who qualified in the first round and payments will amount to approximately \$198. The second round effort is approximately 50 percent complete and should be completed within the next six months.

On the recreation side of EDRP II it was reported that LDWF has a number of contracts in place and ongoing. These include one was for baitfish disease analysis, and another for bait production. **Hanifen** also reported that the EDRP funded repairs to the hatchery at Booker Fowler in central Louisiana are complete. He further noted that the Department is working on artificial reef enhancements projects in the Lake Pelto area and that the Department had just signed an agreement with the LADOT to use bridge rubble (approx 40 spans from the I-10 bridge replacement project) for two large artificial reef sites in east Lake Pontchartrain.

## TEXAS

**Lance Robinson** provided the report for Texas indicating that most of their work involved oyster restoration both in EDRP I and II; and, that most of the funds dedicated to date have been spent. He indicated also that as a result of Hurricane Ike funding, some of the work which was scheduled under the EDRP II sub award for access repairs was absorbed by FEMA and was being performed by Jefferson County in the Sabine Lake area. As a result, funds originally scheduled for these repairs were re-aligned to provide for additional oyster cultch plants that are expected to occur during the spring and summer of 2010. **Robinson** indicated that an estimated \$2M will be spent on cultch plants this summer; including, but paid for separately, those funds made available through the Ike supplement.

With reference to the TED/BRD distribution, **Robinson** indicated that the TPWD is planning to mail letters for applications for additional assistance to shrimpers this spring; and, that the planned distributions under EDRP II were going to be complemented with additional funds made available from funding through the Hurricane Ike supplements for damage assessments.

Additionally he reported that the Department expects to conduct a number of habitat restoration projects in the Sabine Lake region utilizing funds allocated under EDRP I. Work on this element is expected to begin this spring and should be complete by the end of the summer.

In an unrelated matter, **Robinson** reported on concerns that have arisen as a result of Hurricane Ike siltation of nearly 8000 acres of oyster habitat in Galveston Bay. Because of the siltation, areas that have historically been classified as protected habitat are now being considered as non exempt habitat. He indicated that if this becomes a reality, then the possibility for pipelines, oil exploration and channelization to impact the historic grounds is increased. **Robinson** said that the Department is negotiating and otherwise working with vested agencies to forestall permitting for this type of encroachment until the full affects of the siltation have been completely examined.

In response to questions regarding the magnitude of the siltation, **Robinson** reported that the reefs were covered with approximately 6 inches of silt. **Mark Berrigan** indicated that similar problems in Florida reefs over past years saw the siltation removed over time through tidal flow

and in some instances by subsequent storm surges; and, he urged Texas to take its time in the permitting for work in the impacted area in order see if the reef will recover over time.

*There being no further discussion or business Wendy Garner advised that the next meeting would be October 2010 and would be held in Clearwater, Florida.*

**STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Wednesday, March 10, 2010  
Orange Beach, Alabama**

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  
Vernon Minton, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Larry Simpson, Executive Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Roy Crabtree, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL  
Bonnie Ponwith, NMFS, Miami, FL

**Others**

Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Ellie Roche, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL  
Wilson Gaidry, Commissioner, Houma, LA  
Tony Reisinger, Texas Sea Grant, San Benito, TX  
Mandy Tumlin, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Donald Waters, Pensacola, FL

**Staff**

James Ballard, *Sportfish Restoration/Aquatic Invasives Coordinator*, GSMFC  
Gregg Bray, *RecFIN(SE) Programmer/Analyst*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Janet Lumpkin, *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

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted as presented.



## Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, October 14, 2009 in Biloxi, Mississippi were approved as written.

## Menhaden Advisory Committee Report

**S. VanderKooy** of GSMFC 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 7.5% 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

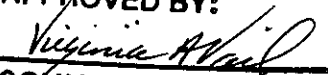
**VanderKooy** reported that the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) compliance matrix is now being reviewed for scientific recommendations not normally included in the S/FFMC matrix. There was general discussion on the compliance matrix.

**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.*

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING  
MINUTES - 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Meeting  
Wednesday, March 10, 2010  
Orange Beach, Alabama**

Chairman V. Vail called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

**L. Simpson** recognized **Lauren Littleton**. **Littleton** graduated from Auburn University with a B.S. in Fisheries and Allied Aquaculture. She is currently a graduate student at the Gulf Coast Research Lab at the University of Southern Mississippi. She is also an avid fisherman and artist. She paints the fish she catches using the Japanese technique called *Gyotaku*. She donated one of her prints to the Commission for this meeting. The Commission framed the print and all registered participants were entered into a raffle. The print was also reproduced on a Commission T-shirt for all participants. The winner of the drawing was **Clint Schexnayder** with Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA.

**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 Carter Smith*)  
Dale Diaz, MDMR, 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, IIF 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

Debbie McIntyre, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Janet Lumpkin, FIN Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Roy Crabtree, NOAA/NMFS/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL  
Logan Repp, Texas Sea Grant, Austin, TX  
Tony Reisinger, Texas Sea Grant, San Benito, TX  
Chuck Adams, Florida Sea Grant, Gainesville, FL  
Judy Jamison, Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Tampa, FL  
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Chris Blankenship, AMRD, Enforcement, Dauphin Island, AL  
Tracy A. Dunn, NOAA Fisheries/SE Enforcement, St. Petersburg, FL  
Bob Zales II, Conservation Coop of GOM, Panama City, FL  
Donald Waters, Commercial Fishermen, Pensacola, FL

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was presented for adoption. *J. Gill 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) – **C. Blankenship** reported that the LEC met on Tuesday, March 9, 2010.

He briefed the Commissioners on the activities of the LEC which included the status of Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF) activities, discussions regarding certification systems to track shrimp, Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) concerns, and status of *The Officers' Pocket Guides*.

*C. Blankenship made several recommendations to the Commissioners on behalf of the LEC. He requested the GSMFC support the concept and development of a Gulf standard for certified Gulf produced shrimp that establishes enforceable guidelines to insure quality and traceability. This will insure product safety and maximize marketability of domestic seafood products. C. Perret moved to accept the recommendation. J. Gill seconded. The motion was approved.*

*The LEC requested that the GSMFC draft a letter to the appropriate federal agencies requesting that they provide the necessary financial support for the JEA program and augment with additional funding in "out" years. C. Perret moved to accept the recommendation. J. Gill seconded. The motion was approved.*

*The LEC also requested that the GSMFC provide full or partial funding (with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council) for a 2 day work session. The session is necessary to revise their operations plan for the next two years. C. Perret moved to accept the recommendation. J. Gill seconded. The motion was approved.*

*M. Ray moved to accept the LEC report. J. Gill seconded. The motion was approved.*

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) Report – **J. Shepard** reported that the TCC met on Tuesday, March 9, 2010. 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 Fisheries Outreach. He briefed the Commissioners on their activities.

The TCC also received an overview from **P. Pate** regarding the Marine Recreational Information Program. Also discussed was GSMFC's Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Inshore Artificial Reefs.

*J. Gill moved to accept the TCC report. M. Ray seconded. The motion was approved.*

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 MAC, V.Vail requested that the Commission address the issue of funding for menhaden port samplers and that appropriate state, industry, NOAA, LSU Sea Grant, Gulf States, and Atlantic States personnel meet to resolve issue. Approximately \$60,000 will be needed. B. Gautreaux made the motion. D. McKinney seconded. The motion was approved.*

*On behalf of the S-FFMC and at the request of the C/RFAP, V. Vail requested the Commission encourage the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) to develop a management strategy that could lead to a controlled harvest of red drum in the EEZ. C. Perret made the motion. B. Gautreaux seconded. The motion was approved.*

The S-FFMC also received a report from **J. Rester** on the proposed natural gas storage in a salt dome currently being mined in Louisiana. The brine is being released through a pipeline 23 miles out, however the pipeline only goes as far as the 3 mile state/federal waters boundary offshore.

Other reports included an update on the FIN Data Program, State reports on the effects of the 2009 freezes; and, an update on the IJF Program. *J. Gill moved to accept the report. J. Shepard seconded. The report was approved.*

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

**C. Adams** reported that the SG-FEAP met on Tuesday, March 9. The group also met with the TCC Outreach Committee. A major topic of discussion was by-laws for the SG-FEAP. Using the original "white paper" developed by the Commission in conjunction with the SG-FEAP, they developed and approved a document entitled "*Bylaws of the Sea Grant Fisheries Extension Advisory Panel*". While SG-FEAP remains autonomous, they will be still very much a part of the Commission structure.

Also discussed at the SG-FEAP meeting were the State's artificial reef programs. This discussion led to recommendations to hold a regional workshop; develop an artificial reef profile; develop an economic impact assessment of artificial reefs; and, maintain consistent dialog with the Commission regarding artificial reefs.

*J. Gill moved to accept the report. C. Perret seconded. The report was approved.*

## **NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office**

**R. Crabtree** reported on the activities of the SERO. He discussed regulatory amendments to the red snapper fishery. Based on a 2009 stock assessment update, the GMFMC's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommended setting the overfishing level (OFL) for red snapper for 2010 at 9.26 million pounds (mp). To account for scientific uncertainty, the SSC recommended an allowable biological catch that was 75 percent of the OFL, or 6.945 mp. Based on these recommendations, the Council approved an action in the regulatory amendment to adjust the current 5.0 mp total allowable catch (TAC) to the recommended 6.945 mp. This will lead to rulemaking to increase the commercial and recreational quotas to 3.542 and 3.402 mp, respectively. NOAA Fisheries Service intends to make these changes effective prior to the June 1 start of the recreational fishing season, and to consider this recreational quota increase in its projections of when the quota will be met and the fishery closed. Those projections will occur simultaneously to publication of the final rule adjusting the quotas. He stated that this year's recreational season will probably be 51 to 60 days long.

In regards to quota adjustment for the greater amberjack fishery, both recreational and commercial sectors overran their respective quotas. Current accountability measures require NOAA Fisheries Service to reduce the commercial quota for 2010 to account for the overage, and close the fishery when the adjusted quota is met. For the recreational fishery, the accountability measure requires NOAA Fisheries Service to consider and account for the overage in projecting the length of the next fishing season. Preliminary estimates for the 2010 season indicate the fishery may reach its quota, accounting for the overage, in July. Because of the impacts on this type of shortened season, the GMFMC voted to begin a framework action to consider alternative fishing seasons for greater amberjack.

He reported that the U.S. State Department has banned the sale of wild caught shrimp from Mexico. This becomes effective April 20, 2010. This is a result of TED inspections that NOAA Fisheries conducted in Mexico. Compliance problems were identified and a solution will be sought.



He stated that a proposed rule was likely in the near future which will look at the categorization of fisheries under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. One change that is being contemplated is the change in the status of the Gulf shrimp fishery. It is currently listed as a Category 3 fishery. This means a fishery having a remote likelihood or no known interaction with marine mammals resulting in serious injuries or mortality. NOAA Observer data indicates the taking of bottlenose dolphin in the shrimp fishery. It is likely that the shrimp fishery will be reclassified as a Category 2 fishery, which means that the fishery occasionally causes mortality or serious injury to marine mammals.

### **NOAA Fisheries Budget Updated**

**L. Simpson** directed the Commissioners to the briefing material he provided which basically is National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) 2011 submission to the President. This material provided a comparison to the NMFS 2010 budget and the NMFS 2011 request. This comparison made it easier to distinguish changes in priorities within the NMFS. He reviewed the submission very briefly. It did not include any earmarks that may or may not be included in the final budget.

He pointed out the possibility of several program terminations. In some instances terminations are actually reordering of priorities. The National Catch share Program has been enacted at \$54 million. The Stock Assessment funds have been expanded to improve that function. There appears to be an emphasis on the Gulf of Mexico (GOM), which is justified because of the number of species and stock assessment requirements that need to be accomplished in the region. Overall there is an increase of \$5 million under Regional Studies; this means that SEAMAP will continue to get at least level funding. SEAMAP was cited as a "model" cooperative State/Federal Program.

Of concern is the omission of funding for the GOM Recreational Fisheries Electronic Log Book Pilot. This is an earmark and may or may not be included in the final budget.

He discussed the Fishermen's Contingency Fund which compensates fishermen for damage or loss of fishing gear, vessels, and resulting economic loss caused by obstructions related to oil and gas exploration. These funds are only used as needed. An increase will probably be required in future years.

He described the American Fisheries Promotion Act, which authorizes a grant program for fisheries research and development projects under the Saltonstall-Kennedy Act. The Act is funded by a 30% duty on imported fisheries products and is used mainly to offset the NOAA Fisheries Budget.

### **Discussion of Alternatives to Otter Trawling**

**W. Gaidry** briefed the Commissioners on alternatives to otter trawling. He provided a PowerPoint presentation. The visuals were of a 22 foot diameter by 18 foot deep net that was submerged for 25 minutes at a stationary dock. He pointed out that it was not unusual to catch a large catch as displayed, but he pointed out that this catch was landed without using fossil fuel,

doing no bottom damage and little by-catch. The by-catch is reduced when species of fish swim against a normal tide; it is only when the tidal current exceeds a certain point that by-catch is increased.

The majority of commercial fishermen in Louisiana are harvesting shrimp with modified beam trawls.

The advantages of a modified beam trawl compared to otter trawling are as follows:

- The cost of harvest is lower.
- Shrimp caught are of higher quality and are in greater demand.
- The value of quality fresh shrimp is less affected by imports and packaged shrimp.
- The nets and gear are easier to operate.
- Nets can be fished on the bottom, mid water and top water with ease and no modifications.

The Environmental advantages of a modified beam trawls are as follows:

- Produces no bottom damage when fished at mid and top water.
- Tidal energy can be used to harvest shrimp (no CO2 emissions).
- Higher by-catch survival.

The more a fishing vessel cost to build, maintain and operate the more fishing effort it must produce to achieve profitability. He stated that it would take thousands of stationary nets and hundreds of typical skimmer boats to equal the yearly fishing effort and environmental impact of one offshore super trawler.

### **Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF)**

**S. VanderKooy** gave a status report of the various IJF projects. He provided a written report. Current activities include a revision of the Oyster FMP and a profile on sand and silver seatrout (*Arenarius*).

The revised Oyster FMP is essentially being re-written. The original FMP was done in 1991. More public health information is being included in the new version.

The *Arenarius* TTF has been working on the development of a short survey instrument for sampling the market channels and economic value of the two species included in the profile. It is anticipated that a final draft will be ready in May or June 2010. This deadline may be impacted by the delayed availability of FY2010 IJF funds.

### **SEAMAP Program Report**

**J. Rester** provided the Commissioners with a written report. Current SEAMAP surveys include a Winter, Summer and Fall Shrimp/Groundfish; a Winter, Spring and Fall Plankton; a Reefish survey; an Inshore Longline Survey; and inshore fishery independent sampling.

The SEAMAP Data Manager has developed ways to visualize SEAMAP data and an Oracle Discoverer site that allows you to interactively query the SEAMAP database. All of this information can be accessed at <http://seamap.gsmfc.org>.

### **Sport Fish Restoration Program Report (SFP)**

**J. Ballard** provided a written report of SFP activities. He reported on the activities of the Artificial Reef Subcommittee. He is exploring funding opportunities to support artificial reef monitoring projects.

He reported that the SFP work plan for 20101 was amended to include support of the new TCC Fisheries Outreach Subcommittee. The focus of this group will be to establish a status of the member states and other agencies in the GOM in regard to their outreach activities and to share with each other what is being done.

He reported on other activities involving SFP, which includes attending a *Morone* meeting, serving on the Interagency Giant Salvinia Control Team, and providing travel to members of the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species.

### **Fisheries Information Network (FIN) Report**

**D. Donaldson** provided a written report on current program activity and gave a PowerPoint presentation on a year in review of both commercial and recreational activities.

Trip ticket programs have been fully implemented in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida. Mississippi has implemented trip ticket programs with oyster, bait shrimp and finfish. They will work on implementing programs in other fisheries in the future.

All states are using electronic trip ticket reporting. This allows electronic reporting of data and is currently used by approximately 450 dealers on-line.

He reported that under recreational catch/effort over 47,000 interviews have been conducted. This exceeds 2009 quotas for all modes by over 20%. He provided a summary of the results.

Biological sampling has collected approximately 20,000 otoliths for about 30 species in both commercial and recreational sampling. He provided details regarding species and numbers sampled.

Currently the FIN data management system has over 26 million records loaded into the system, including commercial trip ticket data from 1985 – 2010, biological data from 2002 – 2009, and recreational catch and effort data from 1981 – 2008. The system has been online since July 2001.

### **Habitat Program Report**

**J. Rester** provided a written report on Habitat activity. The Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Final Rule requires a review and revision of the EFH components every 5 years, and EFH provisions are revised or amended as warranted, based on available information. He will be working with the GMFMC and NOAA Fisheries staff to complete this requirement.

He updated the Commissioners on GMFMC Advisory Panel activity. They have addressed issues that include the Mississippi Coastal Improvements Program; deepwater coral; Individual Environmental Report 11 for hurricane protection in New Orleans; potential impacts from the proposed Richton salt dome; open water disposal of dredge material in the Mississippi Sound; and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Plan projects.

The GSMFC's Aquaculture grant is coming to an end. A final report will be submitted to NOAA Fisheries in April or May.

### **Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Program Report**

**J. Ballard** gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Aquatic Nuisance Species Program. He reviewed the legislation that established the ANS Task Force and Panels. (The Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990, which was amended by the National Invasive Species Act of 1996.)

**J. Ballard** oversees the activities of the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel, established in 1999 under the Gulf of Mexico Program. The Commission took responsibility of the panel in 2002. He reviewed the make-up of the Panel.

Currently Georgia, Louisiana and South Carolina have completed ANS plans that are approved. Alabama and Mississippi finished plans and will submit them to the ANS TF in the spring of 2010 for approval. Florida, Texas and North Carolina are in various stages of completing and submitting ANS plans.

He reviewed accomplishments to date which includes a new website that was just completed. The domain name is GSARP.org. The website will be updated as necessary to make sure it stays current.

He briefed the Commissioners on all ongoing activities.

### **Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP I & II) Report**

**R. Hode** gave a PowerPoint presentation which addressed spending by state within each of the subaward categories for both EDRP I and EDRP II. Specific emphasis was placed on the fact that EDRP I spending was at approximately 62 percent of its budget while the timeline for the grant was at approximately the 70% point.

**R. Hode** pointed out that the oyster component remained the most active component Gulf wide and that the States had almost reached the required \$38 M mandated by Congress for oyster

restoration with the current spending level at \$37.49 million. It was further noted that with Louisiana now actively involved in its Cooperative Research component, spending over the next few months should reflect a marked increase.

In regards to EDRP II spending, **R. Hode** indicated that Gulf wide reimbursements continued to be ahead of the grant timeline. 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.

He further reported that the required 2 percent amounted to nearly \$1.7 million and that spending through January 2010 had amounted to \$1.53 million or about 90 percent of the target milestone. This milestone was expected to be met within the next 45 days as Louisiana was currently making a second round of distributions under the TED component. 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 \$24.

### **Economic Data Program (EDP) Report**

**A. Miller** gave a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed current projects which include: Economic Survey of the Inshore Shrimp Fleet; Economic Survey of Fishing-related Business; Marine Angler Expenditure Survey; and National Marine Recreational Use Economic Survey. He reviewed the goal and objective of these programs and an updated the Commissioner on the status of each. Additional funding has been secured to continue projects as necessary through 2014.

He conducted a Gulf States Fisheries Economic Workshop to promote communication, coordination, and professional development among fisheries economists throughout the GOM. The Workshop held on the previous day was attended by approximately 20 fisheries economist.

**A. Miller** is also working with NOAA to establish a GSMFC Economic Information Portal. This will be a central location for fisheries economic literature resources as well as economic data.

### **Selection of Charles H. Lyles Award Recipient**

**C. Perret nominated Albert King for the 2010 recipient of the Charles H. Lyles Award. J. Gill moved the nomination be closed. C. Perret seconded.**

**C. Perret** stated that Albert King was born on the East Coast of Florida, one of 11 children. He moved with his parents in a Model A with a trailer to Morgan City, LA in the late 1940s. His father was a shrimper and Albert along with his brothers joined him in the shrimping business. He fished for many years before getting into processing shrimp. He worked out of Brownsville, TX, Grand Isle, LA, Gulf Shores, AL and South America. He served on the GMFMC for nine years. His career in the fishing industry spans many years in a wide range of activities.

***He was nominated by acclamation.***

## State Director's Reports

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

The New Year began in Florida with an unprecedented two week+ period of freezing to sub-freezing temperatures throughout the state; near shore water temperatures in the Florida Keys dropped into the low 50's. This prolonged cold spell has had a significant impact on Florida's marine life, as well as agriculture/aquaculture operations. The impact on fish and wildlife populations will be assessed over the long term. At this point [as of February 1] all impact effects are only approximate estimates, and subject to change as data are gathered. Extensive fish kills involving many species have been reported statewide, with the greatest impact appearing to be in the southern half of the peninsula; "thousands" of dead snook, groupers [including goliaths], snappers and other species associated with coral reefs have been observed. On January 15, the FWC issued an Executive Order removing size, season, bag limit, possession restrictions and certain gear restrictions for all dead saltwater fish to facilitate their removal from the shore or inshore and near shore waters by individuals and local governments. A second Executive Order, closing the snook fishery until August 31 and closing the tarpon and bonefish fisheries through March, was issued the same day. The FWC acted to close these fisheries temporarily as a precautionary measure. The FWC intends to examine all available information on the extent and impact of the freeze during these closures and then make a determination whether any additional actions are needed to protect these fisheries. Also, while mortality of other saltwater and freshwater species of fish has been observed, there is not yet sufficient information to determine whether any management actions are necessary.

The FWC Fish and Wildlife Health group is compiling the statewide cold-kill information reported through the FWC Fish Kill Hotline. After all this information is checked, cross-referenced, and tallied we'll have a better idea of the geographic extent of the event and a general idea of the species, and size-classes, affected. While the fish kill reports provide a general picture of the magnitude and geographic extent of the cold-related mortalities, most likely we'll never know for sure how many fish of how many species died from the cold. What we can say is that this was an unusually long and intense cold event (i.e., not the kind of cold event we see on a regular basis) that caused massive mortalities of a large number of our inshore fish.

However, according to FWRI scientists, it will take several months before we have an idea of how the fish populations were actually affected by this cold-kill as "dead fish counts" are very uncertain (read unreliable...) for a number of reasons: some of the dead fish are consumed by scavengers before they ever float and can be counted by somebody; some float but may end up washed up on shore and consumed by other scavengers (raccoons, birds.) before being counted; some decompose quickly and are not around long enough to be seen; and some are pushed by currents, winds, or tides into inaccessible areas (e.g., intertidal mangrove forests) where they may never be seen. The only reliable way to assess the impact of massive mortality events like this (cold kills, red tides, etc.) is to look at the species' catch rates documented in FWRI's standardized, long-term surveys. Because these surveys are long-term, distributed over different areas of the state, and follow standardized, statistically-based sampling protocols they give a "before-and-after" statewide perspective of the impacts of the prolonged cold spell. A species

that suffered losses high enough to impact the population will definitely show lower catch rates after an event like this. The degree of decrease in catch rates for a species will provide an estimate of the relative impact on the population: for some species we might see catch rates cut by 1/2, others by only 1/3, and others maybe not at all. Important questions to be considered during the next several months include: how many spawning-size snook/tarpon/sea trout/red drum/ bonefish/angels/ barracudas/etc. were lost; were these losses large enough to compromise reproduction in the population for the next few years; how many juveniles from the 2009 year-class were lost; and was mortality of a species greater on the Atlantic or Gulf coast?

In addition to fisheries impacts, over 4500 cold stunned sea turtles were rescued from shallow coastal waters on both coasts. Approximately 80% could be revived [warmed] and were subsequently released offshore into "warmer" waters. Die-offs of corals have been reported in the shallower waters of the Florida Keys and are being investigated to determine the extent. Initial data suggest that most of the more than 200 manatees found [so far] dead in state waters died from cold stress. This greatly exceeds the previous record of 56 for manatee deaths from cold stress, set in 2009; the record for manatee deaths in one year is 429. There have also been reports of coral mortality in the shallow water areas of the Keys; an evaluation is being conducted.

Last year the Florida Legislature established a resident shoreline saltwater fishing license with a fee of \$7.50 and an effective date of August 1. Resident shoreline licenses went on sale July 1, 2009; from 1 July through 31 December, 53,820 shoreline licenses were sold. Also, sales of other resident as well as non-resident recreational saltwater fishing licenses during this time period increased by 24%, compared to prior year (2008) sales in these months. 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.

Staff in the artificial reef program participated in a damage assessment dive on the Oriskany off Pensacola in November 2009, nine days after Tropical Storm Ida made landfall in Mobile. The Oriskany was sunk in May 2006 in the ship suffered no major structural damage. However, they observed a large section of vertical exterior metal sheeting was missing from both the starboard and port sides of the smoke stack. This blown out metal sheeting created an opening approximately 20 feet wide by 50 feet high on both sides of the smoke stack aft of the bridge; divers appear to like this new swim-through passage. Tissue samples from red snapper, vermilion snapper and gray triggerfish were also collected and sent to the Texas A&M lab for PCB analysis; a report is not expected before March 2010.

In April 2009 the University of West Florida included the Oriskany Reef in their fish tagging study; the objective of this tagging effort was to gain some basic information on site fidelity, recapture rates, and release mortality of recreationally targeted reef fish species associated with the Oriskany. A total of 199 reef fish were tagged and released on April 21, 2009, including 113 red snapper and 69 vermilion snapper; anglers were asked to report catches of tagged fish. Of the 113 red snapper tagged, 12 were reported caught – 10 from the Oriskany. Of the 69 vermilion snapper tagged, 2 were reported – both from the Oriskany. Approximately 93% of

the recaptures occurred within the first 20 days of the opening of the 2009 recreational red snapper fishing season (June 1 - August 14). The most important aspect of this study as it relates to the PCB analysis is the site fidelity of red snapper and high level of recreational fishing pressure early in the red snapper season. During this study, red snapper were documented to have a high site fidelity rate (83%, i.e., ten of the twelve red snapper recaptures) within the seven month period after release. And all but one of red snapper tag returns was caught within the first twenty days of the 2009 red snapper season. Both vermilion snapper returns also occurred during the first 20 days of red snapper season.

Partnering with Florida Sea Grant, NOAA and the University of Florida IFAS Extension, the FWC co-hosted the 2010 Florida Artificial Reef Summit January 21-23 in Cocoa Beach. The theme for this year's Summit was "Fisheries Management and Artificial Reefs". The first day addressed management issues, day two emphasized issues related to reef development, and day three focused on the importance of citizen involvement in reef development and monitoring. With 33 speakers, 20 poster presentations and over 180 attendees, this year's Summit was deemed a total success. The agenda and abstracts of the presentations at the 2010 Florida Artificial Reef Summit are available on the Florida Sea Grant Web site: [www.flseagrant.org](http://www.flseagrant.org).

Last year the FWC established six regional rotating ten day closures of the blue crab fishery to allow for retrieval of lost or abandoned blue crab traps and any traps left in the water during the fishery closure. Last July and August a total of 3,063 blue crab traps were retrieved in four of the regions by FWC contractors and volunteer groups. In January 2010 Trap retrieval was conducted in the remaining two areas: the St. Johns River system [east coast] and the western Florida Panhandle. Six hundred eighty eight blue crab traps were removed from the St. Johns River system and 277 from waters in the western panhandle.

The Division of Marine Fisheries Management continues to post a "Marine Fisheries Hot Sheet" on their web site at the beginning of each month. The Hot Sheet addresses hot issues and FWC Commission agenda items, with links to important back up documentation. The Hot Sheets may be accessed at: [http://www.myfwc.com/RULESANDREGS/SaltwaterRules\\_HotSheets.htm](http://www.myfwc.com/RULESANDREGS/SaltwaterRules_HotSheets.htm).

Recent Commission regulatory actions affecting Gulf fisheries include:

- Approval of amendments to the Commission's shrimp rules to allow: 1] use of any turtle excluder device certified by NOAA Fisheries in state waters, and 2] use of any bycatch reduction device certified by NOAA Fisheries in state waters. Use of a Florida Finfish Excluder meeting specified criteria is also allowed in inshore and near shore waters
- Declaration of bonefish as a gamefish to promote public awareness of the importance of this premier sportfish to Florida and approval of a rule include all species in the Family Albulidae found in Florida and applies Florida's regulations to bonefish in federal waters.
- Approval of an amendment to the Commission's spiny lobster rule that extends the moratorium on issuance of new commercial dive permits until July 2015, after the evaluation of casitas has been completed and reviewed.



- Prohibiting the harvest of any lemon shark in state waters.

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

Work continues on the Little River Bay marsh rehabilitation project located near Bayou La Batre. Funding for this project is provided through the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP). This work is anticipated to be completed in June 2010.

EDRP fisherman assistance programs are anticipated to be concluded by summer of this year.

MRD has continued EDRP oyster recovery projects. Reclassification of upper Mobile Bay has been approved by the Alabama Department of Public Health and U.S. Food and Drug Administration and an oyster relay program is scheduled to begin by the end of March. Oysters will be moved to construct a new oyster reef in lower Mobile Bay.

The ADCNR Commissioner has approved a new oyster management plan which takes a more active approach towards the monitoring of harvest and maintaining productive beds. The plan is tied to legislation which has passed the Alabama House and is scheduled for vote in the Senate.

A SEAMAP winter cruise was completed without incident. MRD is discussing the addition of a fishery-independent vertical line survey with SEAMAP after NMFS indicated a need to address age structure and abundance estimates of reef fishes.

MRD participated in outreach events at the Alabama Coastal Bird Festival and Conservation Expo in Fairhope and the Mobile Boat Show. These events included MRD's interactive "touch tanks". In addition, MRD distributed the 2010 Marine Information calendar and the 2010 Children's Marine Art calendar.

MRD has been working with ADCNR State Lands Division to secure Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) funds for much needed renovation and construction activities within the Division. Plans include the construction of a new laboratory and office facility at Claude Petet Mariculture Center (Gulf Shores) and the renovation of boat basins located at Divisional offices in Gulf Shores and on Dauphin Island.

MRD is working with the Department's Engineering Section and FEMA to repair damages to the Ft. Morgan boat ramp caused by Tropical Storm Ida. A breakwater and finger pier was damaged at this location.

MRD submitted a proposal to NOAA requesting that Alabama be classified as an exempted state under the National Saltwater Angler Registry Program. Alabama has met the initial requirements for exemption status and is currently classified as exempted. An MOU is currently in development between NOAA and Alabama to complete the exemption designation.

Due to increased reports of the Asian tiger shrimp, *Penaeus monodon*, during the last shrimp season, AMRD has attempted to increase public awareness of this exotic species by informing the shrimping community through distribution of fliers that describes the shrimp and their potential impacts to the fishery/ecology.

Fishery-Independent Assessment Monitoring Program (FAMP) samples were collected and processed for biological/hydrographic data at monthly intervals to maintain continuity of the 30 year program. Bi-annual catch reports were submitted to GSMFC.

MRFSS samplers collected 252 shore, 118 charter, and 273 private boat interviews in Wave 6 which exceeded quotas for this period.

MRD responded to reported fish kills resulting from prolonged cold weather events. Affected fish consisted primarily of silver mullet, *Mugil curema*. Extreme cold temperatures were also attributed to several turtle strandings and the death of one manatee and several dolphins.

The Enforcement Section began using the new Conservation Officer Online Reporting System (COORS) to complete weekly, monthly and fleet maintenance reports. This system has replaced paper reporting for these reports and eliminated duplicate data entry. All cost of maintenance and operations will be tracked more efficiently and reports can be produced in a timely manner.

The Marine Resources Remote Monitoring Program took a large step forward with the placement of four cameras at strategic locations to assist in the monitoring of activity and maritime domain awareness in coastal Alabama. These cameras are the first four of what will eventually be over 20 high quality, thermal and infrared cameras that will be placed all along the Alabama coast. The images are transferred to the internet and are accessible to the officers in the field via laptop computers with cell cards and cellular phones with 3G capability.

The Enforcement Section took delivery of an 8 meter Silver Ships patrol vessel. This vessel was purchased with Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) funds and has been placed in coastal Baldwin County.

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

Enforcement - The Office of Marine Patrol, Marine Law Enforcement activities for October 2009 – February 2010 consisted of 1447 boat patrol hours with 639 contacts which resulted in 34 total citations. These citations mostly consisted of violations concerning red snapper and sharks.

Shrimp and Crab Bureau - Mississippi waters north of the Intracoastal Waterway closed for shrimping on January 14, 2010, waters south of the Intracoastal Waterway will close April 30. Despite 2009's latest season opening on record, shrimp landings have increased over 1.7 million pounds from 2008 with 6,368,400 pounds being recorded. These are the second highest landings since Hurricane Katrina. License sales for resident shrimpers have been on a steady decline with 512 sold for 08-09 season, down considerably from over 1000 purchased ten years ago. These

low numbers are indicative of the many hardships in the shrimping industry, which this year include poor prices due to cheap imported shrimp, increased operational costs and loss of historical infrastructure support.

The DMR Endangered Species Act Section 6 Agreement Application to NOAA Fisheries was approved to promote better cooperation on the conservation of threatened and endangered marine species.

The 2010 MS Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program was held in late January for waters within a ½ mile from the main shoreline. January 21-27 active traps were moved by owners from the closure area for January 28-30 any trap remaining in the closure area was considered derelict and removed by volunteers. The Mississippi crab trap cleanup program 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. Over 150 volunteers registered and recovered 350 derelict crab traps to be recycled. To date, through the cooperative efforts of all agency partners, volunteers and fishermen, over 18,270 derelict traps have been removed and recycled.

On March 26 the DMR and partners will hold the 5th 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. "Mississippi Artificial Reefs and Reef Fish Studies" will be the subject of the seminar. The previous seminar, "Mississippi Coastal Invasive Species" was held November 2009.

Shellfish Bureau - An Oyster Task Force Committee was formed with membership representing various stakeholders in the oyster industry. The goal of the task force is to improve the oyster fishery on the Mississippi Gulf Coast by acting as an advisory capacity to the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. The group has held two meetings thus far and the main focus has been on limited entry issues.

Oyster reef Monitoring and Assessment: The MDMR Shellfish staff is continuing its monitoring efforts by taking one-minute dredge tows on the oyster reefs. The staff also collects weekly water samples in compliance with the National Shellfish Sanitation Program.

Staff conducted a survey of how many fishermen used box or basket dredges vs. the traditional rope or bag dredges. Of the fishermen surveyed, 72 harvesters used basket dredges and 112 used rope dredges. Additionally, the volumes of the catch of the two types of dredges were sampled with no significant differences observed.

Oyster Season: The oyster season has been disrupted by frequent and prolonged closures from rainfall attributed to El-Nino. The season total harvest is approximately 191,000 sacks to date.

Marine Sanitation Device Program: 179 marine sanitation devices have been distributed to Mississippi licensed oyster harvesters as part of the EDRP I Oyster Stewardship Program.

Artificial Reef Bureau - There were 5 loads of concrete culverts and 115 Goliath Reef Balls deployed on Mississippi's offshore artificial reefs. EDRP funds were used for both the inshore and offshore reef restorations/enhancements.

In November we deployed a 176 foot menhaden vessel "The Great Wicomico". This vessel was donated by Omega Protein to the Mississippi Artificial Reef Program. Omega Protein shared the cost of cleaning and sinking the vessel with the Mississippi's artificial reef program. EDRP funds were used for the state's share of cleaning and sinking.

The construction of a Key was started in Western Mississippi Sound off of Hancock County. The key is being constructed from the old jail house and local infrastructure. To date approximately 6,000 tons of concrete rubble has been used for the structure. When finished the Key will have three 200 foot sections 4 foot above MLW.

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 attended an American Fisheries Society meeting February 3 - 5. Personnel are working closely with the Coastal Conservation Association to schedule Casting for Conservation kids fishing tournaments for 2010. These tournaments utilize EDRP II public outreach funds.

New recreational fishing records for October 2009-February of 2010.

Fly-fishing Tackle:

Southern Flounder 2 lbs. 12.8 oz.

Striped Mullet 4 lbs. 4.77 oz.

Coastal Preserves - Coastal Preserves is working with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) on the Mississippi Coastal Improvement Plan (MSCIP). Congress has already appropriated \$439 million to begin work on the ecosystem restoration projects outlined in the MSCIP plan. The barrier islands restoration will be the first of these projects initiated.

Coastal Preserves is also working with the ACE and other partners to find ways to replace the material lost from the Deer Island marsh restoration site during Katrina and bring the site elevation back up to the original project design. A contractor working on a Jackson County dredging project recently added about 30,000 cubic yards to the site. Being able to spread this more consolidated material over the site to achieve the design elevation has been problematic, but we are learning a great deal from this effort. An additional 12,000 marsh plants were planted over this new material and over other bare areas within the site. The Deer Island Marsh Restoration Project has inspired the formation of a Beneficial Use Group (BUG) for coastal Mississippi. This group is still young and developing slowly, but we are getting regular participation from representatives of many different state and federal agencies as well as congressional staff and local groups.

Coastal Preserves outreach accomplishments during this period include a keynote presentation at a seminar on Mississippi Coastal Invasive Species. Trained Pearl River Community College botany students on identifying and mapping aquatic invasive species. Trained grounds-keeping

staff at an RV park with salvinia infested ponds on how to identify and treat aquatic invasive species.

During this reporting period, the Coastal Preserves program acquired one parcel totaling 2 acres. The owners of four parcels totaling 526 acres have accepted the state's offer; we are currently working on the options and to resolve title problems on two tracts. *Total acreage as of June 30, 2009 is 35,311 acres of State-owned lands managed by the Coastal Preserves Program.* The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service manages 3,300 acres at Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The National Park Service, Gulf Islands National Seashore manages 6,486 acres within Ship, Horn, and Petit Bois Islands. Collectively this includes more than sixty percent of the 72,000 acres proposed for acquisition in the original 20 coastal preserves. Coastal Preserves applied for a land acquisition grant from the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program to purchase a portion of Cat Island. Our proposal ranked 9<sup>th</sup> and is likely to receive funding, though the official notices have not yet been sent out.

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

#### HURRICANE RECOVERY PROGRAMS

##### Katrina/Rita – EDRP 1

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. Work continues under all three sub grants agreements: Reseeding, Rehabilitating and Restoring Oyster Reefs (GSMFC Subaward #OR-RRR-020-2006-01); Rehabilitating Oyster Bed and Shrimp Grounds (GSMFC Subaward #OB-SGR-021-2006-01) and Cooperative Research to Monitor Recovery of Gulf Fisheries (GSMFC Subaward #CR-M-022-2006-01).

In the wake of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the Department reprogrammed funds within the EDRP 1 program to increase funding for cooperative research. Surveys of commercial harvesters and wholesale/retail dealers have been developed to help characterize the long-term effects of the hurricanes on their operations. Survey data include information on individual, family and household characteristics, investment costs, percent of indebtedness, size of operation, investment costs, operating costs, handling and storage capacity, perceived problems facing each industry, opinions on various management practices, etc. 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. Holders of a valid 2008 resident wholesale/retail seafood dealer's license and trip ticket-reported purchases valued at \$20,756 (30<sup>th</sup> percentile) or more during the three-year period 9/1/2005 to 8/31/2008 were eligible to participate in the program. Each qualified resident commercial fisherman who reported sales that were valued at \$5,948 or more (*i.e.*, the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile) of shrimp, oysters, crabs, saltwater finfish, wild-caught crawfish, or freshwater finfish on LDWF trip tickets during the same time period and who held a valid resident commercial fisherman's license in 2008 was also eligible to participate in the program. the level of compensation is commensurate with the level of participation in Louisiana fisheries; higher level participants are required to provide more and detailed information on their surveys. Application materials were mailed to 4,433 harvesters and 395 dealers; 3,098 harvester and 318 dealer surveys have been mailed to those who have completed their application packages. To-date

LDWF has authorized payment for completed surveys to 1,107 harvesters and 143 dealer's surveys, and has paid a total of \$5.5 million.

#### EDRP 2

EDRP 2 (Louisiana Fishing Industry Supplement for Hurricane Recovery – Economic Assistance for Louisiana Commercial and Recreational Fishermen and TED-BRD Compliant Fishermen – GSMFC Subaward # ACF-025-2007-02) projects are continuing. Economic assistance payments are being distributed to eligible Louisiana resident commercial fishers, commercial fishing vessel license holders in specific fisheries, and wholesale/retail seafood dealers who were licensed and had recorded sales or purchases of seafood on LDWF trip tickets during the qualifying period (September 2004 through August 2005). Individual participants were paid commensurate with the level of their participation in Louisiana fisheries; fishers, vessel owners and dealers with the highest value of sales/purchases received more in assistance payment. Charterboat operators who held a resident charter fishing guide license during the qualifying period (License Year 2004 and 2005 through August 2005) were also eligible for equal assistance payments. The initial round of assistance payments were completed in late 2009. Funds remaining after the initial payments have been reallocated and are now being distributed. To-date approximately \$25 million has been distributed under this program. Another major effort under this grant is that LDWF has entered into an agreement with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development to develop two artificial reef sites in the Lake Pontchartrain basin. Bridge rubble from the Hurricane Katrina-damaged I-10 twin spans will be recycled to create these reefs.

#### Gustav/Ike

LDWF launched a \$30 million reimbursement program designed to assist the commercial fishing industry following Hurricanes Gustav & Ike. The funds are part of the \$40 million appropriation by U.S. Congress allocated to Louisiana for fisheries disaster assistance to commercial fishing industry under sections 308(b) and 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (16 U.S.C. 4107)(NOAA Grant NA09NMF4520024).

To qualify, licensed resident commercial fisherman and wholesale/retail seafood dealers must have reported sales or purchases of saltwater species on LDWF trip tickets during September 1, 2005 through August 31, 2008 (and received by LDWF by November 30, 2008) and held a 2008 resident Louisiana commercial fishing or wholesale/retail dealer license. Half of the qualifying amount is paid to the applicant up front and the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of eligible reimbursement is issued after the participant submits acceptable receipts/invoices dated after July 1, 2009 documenting the use of the entire initial payment on eligible items

#### Timeline:

- LDWF received grant April 2009
- Packets mailed out Friday June 12, 2009, over 4,000 packets sent out
- First checks mailed out September 8, 2009.
- Over 70% of eligible fisherman/dealers submitted packets to participate
- First batch of 2<sup>nd</sup> half checks mailed December 14, 2009.
- To date over \$18 million in funds have been distributed.
  - Over 2,500 1<sup>st</sup> half checks (over \$14 million)

- Almost 1,000 2<sup>nd</sup> half checks (almost \$4 million)

## MARINE FISHERIES DIVISION

### 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 vermilion 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. Several inshore artificial reefs in the Lake Pontchartrain and Terrebonne Parish areas were enhanced using limestone (Terrebonne Parish) and reef balls (L. Pontchartrain). Development of additional inshore artificial reefs in Lake Pontchartrain is in the planning stages, using bridge rubble from the hurricane-damaged I-10 bridges.

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 undertaken an ambitious oyster reef rehabilitation effort since 2007 that has included planting approximately 135,000 cubic yards of cultch material at selected locations on the public oyster seed grounds. The first of these reef rehabilitation projects occurred in 2007 and, after two years of growth and development, the 2007 locations in St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes were opened to harvest during the 2009/2010 oyster season. Harvesters quickly realized the success of these rehabilitation efforts as they were able to obtain approximately 64,000 barrels of seed oysters from the 2007 locations. The future value of this harvest once taken to market is estimated at nearly \$5.4 million resulting in a positive benefit-cost analysis. Biological monitoring of the 2008 (one location) and 2009 (five locations) reef rehabilitation projects continues and successful recruitment and growth of oysters has been noted on these locations.

The 2009/2010 oyster season on the public grounds has been far below average as the public grounds continue to show the combined effects of hurricanes and freshets. Low resource

availability (except for on the 2007 cultch plants) has severely limited overall landings, yet a recent opening of a previously unavailable area in Lake Borgne provided a much-needed boost to the industry. This area of unleased state water bottoms was opened to harvest by the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission in November 2009 and field surveys of harvest activity estimated that approximately 120,000 sacks of market-size oysters were taken at a dockside value of approximately \$3 million.

An additional project providing much-needed water bottom information was recently completed in two portions of MS Sound. A side-scan sonar assessment of approximately 54,000 acres of water bottoms has resulted valuable information on parameters such as bottom type, bathymetry, and submerged aquatic vegetation. This information will be utilized by both the shrimp and oyster management programs.

### SHRIMP/CRAB

Marine debris removal efforts continue in coastal Louisiana focusing on the shrimp fishing grounds. Four hundred and forty square miles or 110 four-square mile grids of coastal water bottoms in portions of Lake Borgne, Lake Pontchartrain Middle Grounds, Lake St. Catherine, Calcasieu Lake, Vermilion/Cote Blanche Bays and Barataria/Caminada Bays have been cleaned of debris through the Department's contract with Crowder-Gulf Joint Venture. The contractor is currently working on a side scan sonar survey of an additional 120 square miles of water bottoms located within the southeastern portion of Lake Pontchartrain. Once these data have been reviewed, the LDWF will assign the contractor with specific grids to be cleaned. 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.

Governor Jindal created the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force by Executive Order in August, 2009. 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. Ex-officio members include representatives of the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board, LSU Department of Food Science, LSU Sea Grant 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 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.

A new rule expanding the window by which businesses operating under a "Special Live Bait Dealers Permit" may take live shrimp and live croaker during closed shrimp season has been ratified.



The crustacean program has also been assisting the blue crab industry in its efforts to pursue certification as a sustainable fishery under the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). A pre-assessment of the fishery has indicated that the fishery may be a likely candidate for certification but this process may take some time to complete. Another new rule establishing a 10 day crab trap closure in a portion of the upper Barataria Basin for purposes of removing abandoned crab traps has also been ratified and the closure begins February 27, 2010 in conjunction with the volunteer trap clean-up day.

## RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT DIVISION HABITAT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Habitat Management Program's purpose is participation in federal, state, and local planning and permitting efforts to help conserve, protect, and enhance healthy viable habitat for fish resources. Program activities include review and comment of coastal use permits and consistency applications within the coastal zone, oversight of all permitted activities within the state's public oyster grounds, planning and comment activities associated with the state's coastal restoration activities and with large civil works projects such as hurricane protection levee systems and creation of reservoirs, participation in the interagency advisory panels for the state's two freshwater diversion structures, response and damage assessment activities resulting from unpermitted discharges of oil or hazardous materials, and regulation of seismic exploration activities.

### Coastal Use Permit Review

In 2009, we reviewed approx. 176 new coastal use permit applications (along with assessments and waivers) within the public oyster seed grounds and approx. 100 habitat projects for a total of approx. 276 projects. We collected \$1,248,671.58 in compensation for impacts to the public oyster seed grounds.

### Coastal Wetlands

In 2009, the Research and Assessment Division continued to work with state and federal agencies to develop strategies for slowing the rate of coastal wetlands loss in Louisiana. Following hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, the state of Louisiana embarked on a joint coastal planning process that includes both hurricane protection and coastal wetlands restoration. USACE received funding through a series of supplemental appropriations to provide "100 year level flood protection" in the New Orleans vicinity. USACE put forward individual environmental reports in lieu of Environmental Assessments or Environmental Impact Statements to support this goal. Division staff worked to coordinate and review these hurricane reaches and understand their impacts on estuarine and coastal environments. In addition, there were a number of coastal restoration projects moving through the formulation and development process. They include MRGO restoration and the Violet diversion studies, reauthorization studies of the Caernarvon and Davis Pond Freshwater Diversion projects, the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane protection levee, deepening of the Houma Navigation Canal, Donaldsonville to the Gulf hurricane protection levee, planning for the Port of Iberia Channel Deepening Project, the Southwest Louisiana Coastal Plan, the Calcasieu Dredged Material Management Plan, and the Sabine-Neches Waterway plan. Division staff also participated in evaluation of 10 Coastal

Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act projects for Priority lists 18 and 19. Up to four of the 10 projects may be funded annually for engineering and development activities.

#### Caernarvon and Davis Pond Freshwater Diversion Projects

Extensive fisheries resource monitoring programs continued for both the Caernarvon and Davis Pond Freshwater Diversion Projects. The Caernarvon Project has been operational for 18 years and LDWF personnel have monitored its effects on the fish, wildlife and vegetation populations in the basin throughout its operation. The Davis Pond Project came on-line in July 2002. Ongoing maintenance designed to address problems with flooding in the ponding area north of Lake Cataouatche continued to limit the amount of freshwater diverted through the Davis Pond structure. Research and Assessment Division staff provides input into the operation of both structures.

#### Oil Spills and Hazardous Materials

LDWF's Oil Spill Task Force continued in 2009 to develop and implement plans to protect and restore the state's wildlife, fishery and habitat resources from the adverse effects of oil spills. During this fiscal year, state and federal trustees worked on approximately 20 ongoing oil spill assessment/restoration plans. In addition, the trustees continued to work on developing a way to estimate amounts and impacts of oil spilled as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

LDWF participates with other state and federal agencies in planning restoration of hazardous materials sites. Two planning activities continued in 2009: Bayou Trepagnier in St. Charles Parish and Calcasieu River in Calcasieu Parish.

LDWF also evaluated and responded as needed to approximately 3,000 oil spill notifications which were received from Louisiana State Police. These notifications cover a range of hazardous emissions and chemical spills as well as oil spill related incidents.

#### Seismic Section

The LDWF Seismic Section was created in 1939 specifically to protect oysters, fish, shrimp and other wildlife from the effects of seismic exploration. Seismic exploration uses energy waves to generate a profile of sub-surface reflective layers that help define potential oil and gas traps. The energy waves can be produced by explosives detonated below the ground, by air guns that emit a powerful burst of air just above the surface, or by large vibrating pads placed on the surface. These projects can occur in sensitive wetlands, water bodies and uplands. Seismic agents monitor geophysical companies to protect Louisiana's fish and wildlife resources by ensuring compliance with LDWF seismic rules and regulations. During 2009, the Seismic Section monitored 24 projects throughout the state.

#### DATA MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

##### Data Management System Upgrades

LDWF issued an RFP in June of 2009 for migration of the existing data management system design and implementation. The LDWF legacy system is over 20 years old and is running on an aging platform. The RFP was developed to assist the Department in cataloging existing data bases, convert all data bases into relational SQL tables and migrate existing SAS code to an updated SAS IT server version that will be able to access the SQL tables.

It is anticipated that a contract will be in place by the end of March and work can begin on the data conversion project. Timeline for the project is 15 months.

#### Pilot Voluntary For-hire Reporting System

LDWF contracted with Blue Fin data to develop the voluntary for-hire reporting software. The software is computer based and designed to collect information on the number of for-hire anglers, residence of anglers, time fishing, fishing gear, area fished and information on each species caught and the disposition of each species. In an effort to make the software more attractive to the for-hire industry, several additional features were added, such as a calendar feature, additional windows to log expenses and a trip summary window. Only the data effort data will be transmitted to LDWF.

A total of 8 outreach meetings were held across the state to introduce the for-hire captains to the software. These meeting were also an opportunity for the for-hire industry to provide feedback to the Department on additional features or concerns they may have concerning the program. To date 43 for-hire captains have requested and received a free copy of the software. Legislation is being introduced to make reporting mandatory.

#### MRFSS Data Collection

Over 6,300 intercepts were collected in the calendar year 2009. A total of 528 intercepts have been collected so far in 2010. Staff continues to review the site register and update as necessary. There are no outstanding issues with sites.

Writing instruments continue to be a minor problem with field surveys. Permanent blue pen is the only ink that routinely scans without issue, but this causes problems with the field staff. We will continue to work with GSMFC on this issue.

We are continuing with the for-hire telephone surveys. The correction factor on charter estimates continues to be high due to the small sample size that results from issues with pre-validation efforts. GSMFC and LDWF are working on identifying those vessels which are causing the most issues and seeing how the issue can be addressed and the correction factor lowered.

#### Commercial Landings – Trip Tickets

Landings through scan month September (August data) 2009 have been delivered to the FIN system. Work continues on the remainder of the 2009 trip tickets.

LDWF has improved the design of their trip ticket system by adding the commercial vessel license number to the trip ticket forms. This will provide a clear link to the vessel owner and will help with the validation of vessel numbers. Additional sub-areas have been added to provide more detail on oysters harvested from the public reefs.

LDWF plans on visiting the high volume dealers and retrieving the older paper forms and providing them with the new forms. While on site with those dealers, we will demonstrate the electronic trip ticket reporting software and find out the obstacles that dealers may have with converting to the electronic format.

### FIN Biological Data Collection

There were shortfalls in otolith and length collection for FIN targeted species. Commercial gray snapper, southern flounder and stripped mullet were extremely hard to locate. Gray triggerfish in both recreational and commercial modes could not be located in the quantities required to meet the quota.

Aging the FIN species continues and is expected to be completed within the next 3 to 4 months.

### TIPS Data Collection

There continues to be issues with finding interviews with vessels landing finfish east of the river in Plaquemines parish. Only 3 dealers will occasional land reef fish and migratory species. There is also an issue with dealers who refuse to allow field staff to cut fish in order to collect otoliths and to sex the fish. When field staff east of the river cannot collect finfish TIPS, they will conduct effort interviews with shrimp vessels.

TIPS data collection in the central part of the state (Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes) continues without issue.

### FISHERIES RESEARCH LAB

The Fisheries Research Lab (FRL), located on Grand Isle, has a primary mission to conduct the research required to manage Louisiana's marine, estuarine and freshwater fisheries. The laboratory is made available for the use of other LDWF and non-LDWF entities engaged in fisheries research, management, enforcement, coastal restoration and marine education, and serves as a station for Coastal Study Area III in the Barataria Bay estuarine system. The marine laboratory also supports the monitoring of the Freeport Sulfur Mine Reef for the Louisiana Artificial Reef Program, Elmer's Island WMA, and a local operations center for LDWF Enforcement Agents.

### HURRICANES OF 2008: GUSTAV AND IKE

In the fall of 2008, hurricanes Gustav and Ike forced the evacuation of the lower portions of southern Louisiana. Grand Terre Island sustained a large amount of physical damage, and the facilities of the Lyle S. St. Amant Marine Lab sustained some damage.

During the month of September 2009, lab staff commuted daily for area operations of baseline sampling. The town of Grand Isle and the US National Guard enforced a curfew, and no overnight facilities were available. Power to the Grand Terre facilities was dependent on a diesel generator at the lab.

LDWF rented rooms at the Sand Dollar Marina as soon as they become available, in order to continue operations. After some repair work to the generator on Grand Terre, some lab staff moved back to the Lyle S. St. Amant lab. The facility was solely dependent on a generator for a 24 hour source of energy. Six weeks later the generator malfunctioned, and could no longer be repaired. Lab staff was housed at the Sand Dollar Marina until the end of May 2009.

The month of June 2009, lab staff was housed in the *Ms. Jenna* – a housing barge owned by LDWF. On June 30, 2009, LDWF opened the Fisheries Research Lab on Grand Isle, and staff moved into the new facility.

#### Elmer's Island

The State of Louisiana recently acquired Elmer's Island Wildlife Management Area. This property is managed by Fisheries Research Lab employees.

#### Davis Pond Monitoring Program

Personnel collect biological and physical data to be used for monitoring the effects of the Davis Pond Water Diversion. These samples include finfish, shellfish, isohaline, creel, and Nestier Tray data.

#### Finfish Management

Fisheries Research Lab personnel collect fishery dependent data with the use of Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Surveys (MRFSS), Davis Pond Creel surveys, and otoliths for biostatistical information. Fisheries independent data is collected for coastal species using seines, gill nets, trammel nets and the participation in a coastal fecundity study on Spotted Seatrout.

#### Shellfish Management

Fisheries Research Lab personnel conducted trawl samples using sixteen-foot and six-foot trawls. Post larval shrimp are sampled with a plankton net during incoming tide.

#### Mollusc Management

Fisheries Research Lab personnel monitor the oyster boats involved in the Public Oyster Lease Recovery (POLR) program, collect oyster fisherman production data in the Boarding Run survey and conduct dredge samples.

#### Sea Turtle and Marine Mammal Stranding Program

FRL staff monitors the beaches and marshes in the vicinity of Grand Isle for dead or live stranded dolphins or sea turtles.

#### Freeport Sulfur Mine Reef Monitoring

FRL staff monitors the buoys marking the edges of the Freeport Sulfur Mine reef. Twice monthly, biologists check the buoys to make sure buoys are in working order.

#### Sportfish Tagging Program

The Fisheries Research Lab participates in the Sportfish Tagging Program, tagging Spotted Seatrout and Red Drum.

#### Bay Water Quality Samples

Lab personnel collect weekly water quality data in Bayou Rigaud on the bay-side of Grand Isle. This data is collected to assess areas for oyster production potential.

#### Education and Outreach

The Fisheries Research Lab personnel provide samples and educational facilities for the Outreach staff. Lab personnel participate in the WETSHOP program, a "hands-on" environmental program for teachers, and assist the Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences with their summer educational program.

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

REGULATORY ISSUES - In November, Coastal Fisheries' proposed statewide scoping items were presented to and were approved by the TPWD Commission. Scoping items include reducing the snook minimum size limit from 24 to 22 inches, strengthen the reporting requirements for commercial catches, and splitting the commercial and recreational statewide proclamations into two chapters. The strengthening of the reporting requirements will make it clear who is to report when there are direct sales from a boat to an individual. The splitting of the proclamations will simplify and make it easier to find the provisions in both sections when needed and can also simplify the Texas Register administrative procedure requirements for analysis as compared to when the two items are together.

During the resulting 3 scoping meetings Coastal Fisheries held in mid-January regarding statewide proposals, there was little support for the snook proposal. About 30 anglers spoke against the proposal and only 4 individuals supported the proposal. Additionally, two of the folks who spoke against the proposal represented larger angler groups, the lower Laguna Madre Fly-fishing Association and The Snook Foundation. The basic concern coming from anglers who target snook is the potential additional take of common snook.

Menhaden Total Allowable Catch - The final adjusted estimated pounds of menhaden caught in Texas and landed in Louisiana during the 2009 fishing season totals 14,071,333 pounds. This represents 44.7% of the 31.5 million pound Texas Total Allowable Catch. This is a decrease of 328,977 pounds from the estimated 14,400,310 pounds of menhaden reported on CDFRs. Considering the  $\pm 10\%$  rule, the 2010 quota should be 34,650,000 pounds.

#### COASTAL FISHERIES PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

##### Fish Stocking Efforts

##### 2009 Production Totals

Red Drum = 19,663,126

Spotted Seatrout = 2,762,539

Flounder = 4,335

##### 2010 Production Totals Up-to-date:

Flounder = 8,289 (6,203 in Sabine Lake, 2,086 in Galveston Bay)

PRBMFRS Life History Research - Alligator gar otolith and gonad samples were collected from the Cedar Lakes area for a preliminary reproductive biology study.

Gray snapper samples were collected and processed for a life history study.

Red drum otolith collections from gill net samples continued, as was processing and aging of otoliths collected in previous years.

Otolith and finclip samples from red drum were collected and processed for a genetics project conducted by Dr. John Gold, Texas A&M University.

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

Data from a spotted seatrout temperature tolerance study was summarized and a report was produced.

PRBMFRS Genetics Research - Southern flounder and alligator gar genetic variation studies are continuing.

A cooperative effort with Texas A&M University at Galveston involving species identification confirmation of snook species collected in Texas waters was continued, additional samples from Mexico were obtained by TAMU-G staff and will be analyzed.

Species identification was conducted on shrimp provided by NOAA law enforcement to determine if truth in labeling regulations were followed by seafood wholesalers.

A project to track oyster disease using QPCR was initiated. Staff members involved in initial sample processing was trained in DNA isolation procedures.

Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Project - Preliminary totals from this year's Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Project include 192 volunteers removing 1,374 abandoned crab traps, mostly from San Antonio Bay (591), Aransas Bay (304), and Galveston Bay (276). Since 2002, this project has removed 27,348 traps, including this year's preliminary total.

Artificial Reef Project - TPWD has a large working list of potential donations with over 15 active projects. This year, we anticipate 6 or more rig reefings and close to \$1 million in donations.

TPWD should have a US Army Corps of Engineers permit in place by this summer to expand the Vancouver Liberty Ship Reef, off Freeport, from 40 acres to 160 acres. The Coastal Conservation Association has stock-piled numerous concrete culverts for reefing on this site.

In March, Alamo Concrete (Harlingen) will move 1,600 concrete culverts to our reef material storage site for future reefing at the Port Mansfield near shore reef site within the next year.

Additional materials have been secured at the Sabine Pass storage site for reefing at SALT and Basco's reefs.

TPWD received TxGLO Coastal Impact Assistance Program grant for \$1.5m that will be used for near shore reef work. New projects will be contracted over the next 3 years.

A new website is being created for the reef program. When it come online this summer, it'll contain an interactive site map and more accurate reporting of updates and projects.

## Buyback Programs

Inshore Shrimp Buyback Program - Inshore shrimp buyback round # 25 application period closed on October 15, 2010. During this round, 58 individual bids were received and a total of 32 (17 bay and 15 bait) licenses were purchased at a total cost of \$273,295. The average purchase price was \$8,541.

Shrimp - Overall totals since 1996

- 2,045 licenses purchased
- 1,030 bay licenses and 1,015 bait licenses
- Total cost of \$13.5 million
- 2,045 / 3,231 original licenses = 63%

Crab Buyback Program - Crab buyback round #11 application period closed on October 15, 2009 during which 10 applications were received and 3 licenses were accepted at a total cost of \$27,200 and an average cost of \$9,066.

Crab - Overall totals since 2001

- 45 licenses purchased
- Total cost of \$269,249
- Average price over all rounds = \$5,983
- 45 / 287 original licenses = 16% of total

Finfish Buyback Program - Finfish buyback round #14 application period closed on October 15, 2009 during which 21 applications received and 10 licenses were purchased at a total cost of \$93,800 and an average of \$9,380.

Finfish - Overall totals since 2002

- 214 licenses purchased
- Total cost of \$1,194,450
- Average price over all rounds = \$5,581
- 214 / 549 original licenses = 39%

Oysters - Oyster habitat restoration efforts continue. Last fall, approximately 14,000 cubic yards (~18,000 tons) of river rock were planted in East (Galveston) Bay. This area is closed to the public oyster harvest for 2 years in order to enhance restoration efforts.

In January 2010, oyster dredge samples were taken to assess the spat settling success of TPWD's September 2009 cultch planting. Samples within the restored reef showed catch rates of 2,761 for spat (<25mm)/hour and 2,921 small (>25mm to 75mm) oysters/hour. The mean size of small oysters found attached to the planted cultch was 30.7mm, representing a growth rate of 7.7mm per month.

The Texas General Land Office, the agency responsible for managing state lands, including submerged bottoms, has suggested that oyster habitat lost due to sediment deposition from Hurricane Ike will now be available for oil and gas exploration without constraints. Typically, a minimum 500 foot buffer from oyster habitat is recommended for any oil and gas exploration/production operations. Approximately 8,000 acres of oyster habitat was lost due to sedimentation resulting from Hurricane Ike in September 2008.



In December, TPWD received a \$50,000 grant from the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to continue and expand oyster reef restoration in Galveston Bay. Like the first restoration phase, completed in September 2009, Phase 2 will restore at least 2.5 acres of oyster reef habitat. The purpose is to improve recreational fishing in the area and to provide other "ecosystem services" from oyster reefs. The reefs will be located near privately owned piers and in waters currently closed to commercial oyster fishing due to high bacteria counts. The project will seek to enlist local pier owners to act as stewards of the newly created reefs and to grow oysters by hanging mesh bags filled with oyster shells from their piers. These gardenized oysters will be deposited on top of the reefs after construction is completed to quickly establish an oyster population. None of the oysters produced by the project will be used for human consumption.

In addition to the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership grant, TPWD also received notification that a \$50,000 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant has been awarded to expand Coastal Fisheries community-based oyster habitat restoration efforts. Matching funds for these two grants are coming from Texas Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Kills and Spills programs.

On 4 December 2009, the Texas Department of State Health Services ordered a recall of all oysters harvested from San Antonio Bay after reports that about a dozen people in North Carolina and South Carolina had become sick with a virus after consuming oysters from San Antonio Bay. Oysters harvested in San Antonio Bay from 16-25 November 2009 were included in the recall.

Turtles - In December, TPWD was awarded a \$400,000 grant over a four-year period (\$100,000 per year) to support Kemp's ridley sea turtle conservation in Texas. The money will go to fund beach patrols and programs primarily on Padre Island, including staff salaries, daily monitoring patrols up and down Gulf beaches during the March-August turtle nesting season to collect and protect turtle eggs and manage turtle stranding incidents, staff and volunteer training, and outreach components with stakeholders such as news media and the public. It will also pay for several utility All Terrain Vehicles that are much-needed for beach patrol work. The grant is coming from the Coastal Impact Assistance Program administered by the federal Minerals Management Service, a grant program operated in Texas by the General Land Office.

#### SPECIAL EFFORTS, STUDIES, AND TOPICS

In early December, the TPWD's North Deer Island Project Team was awarded the Coastal America Partnership Award. TPWD was the project lead for this project that protected 1.7 miles of shoreline and restored 9 acres of marsh and nesting upland habitat. The project took nine years to complete, 24,000 tons of limestone, 30,000 smooth cordgrass plugs, and at least 13 partnering organizations.

On 5 October 2010, red tide, *Karenia brevis*, was confirmed in water samples taken from South Padre Island beaches. By mid-October, discolored water, respiratory irritation, and dead fish were routinely being reported all along the south Texas coast, from Port Aransas down to the Mexico border. The bloom continued to kill fish through the end of the year, with the last report

of dead fish coming from Corpus Christi Bay on New Year's Eve. Though final numbers have not been calculated, preliminary results indicate that between 5 and 10 million fish were killed during this red tide event. Though no discolored water or fish kills have been reported since the beginning of this year, low concentrations of red tide persist at a few locations inside Corpus Christi Bay. Because of this red tide, the Texas Department of State Health Services delayed the opening of last fall's oyster season in all of St. Charles, Aransas, Copano, Corpus Christi bays, the Lower Laguna Madre, and South Bay. Also, excessive rainfall delayed the opening of parts of Galveston Bay, Lavaca Bay, San Antonio Bay, Matagorda Bay, and Tres Palacios Bay to commercial oyster harvest.

In mid-February 2010, clouds of dark water were noticed in Rockport Harbor. Samples were collected and the cause of the mahogany-colored water was determined to be the dinoflagellate *Prorocentrum minimum*. The bloom was also seen in Fulton Harbor. *P. minimum* has not been known to be a toxic species in Texas.

In late February 2010, TPWD received reports of discolored water in the lower Laguna Madre and water sample analysis by UT-Pan American confirmed a bloom of *Aureoumbra lagunensis*, the brown tide. The bloom is suspected to be occurring in patches throughout the lower Laguna Madre.

During the 8-10 January 2010 freeze event, impacts on natural resources were minimal as compared to some of the more significant past freezes in 1983 and 1989. The mid-coast and lower coast were most impacted with stunned or killed striped mullet, various drum species (spotted seatrout, sand seatrout, black drum, red drum, and silver perch), gray snapper, spadefish, striped burrfish, blue crabs, and sea turtles. The largest impact to game fish was to spotted seatrout in the San Antonio Bay area and gray snapper in the lower Laguna Madre. Water temperatures in San Antonio Bay areas were as low as 36 degrees F and 42 degrees F in the Laguna Madre. Coastal fisheries and law enforcement staff collected stunned sea turtles and took them to Sea Turtles, Inc. and the Texas State Aquarium for recovery. Of the almost 425 sea turtles picked up, 153 were alive. These were all green sea turtles except for two loggerhead turtles.

On 1 February 2010, Robin Riechers began his new position as the new Coastal Fisheries Division Director. Robin has worked for TPWD since 1988 in various capacities, most recently as Director of the Division's Science and Policy Branch.

On 23 Jan 2010, the 807-ft tanker vessel Eagle Otome collided with the tug Dixie Vengeance near the Sabine Channel in Port Arthur, Texas. The US Coast Guard estimated 10,000 barrels (420,000 gallons) of crude oil spilled from the EAGLE OTOME. Skimming operations were underway soon after the accident, and almost all recoverable oil was picked up by the end of January. Remaining material quickly weathered and broke down. Although some oil entered into Keith Lake and the J. D. Murphree WMA, high tides re-floated and remove much of the shoreline surface oiling. No fish or turtle impacts were noted, but 7 oiled birds were captured, rehabilitated, and released, while 2 birds were recovered dead. This was the largest oil spill in Texas since 1994.

In January 2010, TPWD staff attended a meeting of the Guadalupe-San Antonio and the Trinity-San Jacinto Basin and Bay Area Stakeholder Committees, where members heard presentations from their appointed science team about freshwater inflow recommendations. Other bay-basin committees are also working on the Nueces, Sabine/Neches, and Colorado/Lavaca systems. These committees stem from Senate Bill 3 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007, which established a comprehensive, statewide process to protect environmental flows. The hoped-for outcome is protected environmental flow regimes to help ensure healthy rivers and estuaries.

A featured video on TPWD's YouTube channel is "When Plants Attack," a cautionary story about invasive species threatening Texas. The department's YouTube channel is one of four "social media" outlets TPWD is currently piloting, the others being Twitter, Facebook, and Flickr.

### **Future Meetings**

**G. Herring** reported that the Annual meeting will be held at the Marriott Suites Clearwater Beach on Sand Key, Clearwater Beach, Florida on October 18-21, 2010.

The Commission will meet in Texas, March 14-17, 2011. The exact location has not yet been determined.

### **Publications List**

A new listing of publications was provided for informational purposes.

*There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:20 pm.*

APPROVED BY:

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

OYSTER TECHNICAL TASK FORCE  
CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY  
March 22, 2010

Moderator, **Steve VanderKooy** called the conference call to order at 9:00 a.m. The following participants were in attendance:

Participants

Eric Powell, Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory, Port Norris, NJ  
Rich Fulford, GCRL/USM, Ocean Springs, MS  
Bill Arnold, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL  
Tom Soniat, UNO, New Orleans, LA  
Patrick Banks, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Brian Lezina, LDWF, Lacombe, LA

Staff

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Debbie McIntyre, GSMFC, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

The goal of the GoToMeeting web conferencing and conference call combination was to review with **Powell** the draft stock assessment section (Section 11) from the Oyster FMP. **Powell** suggested a more structured approach to describing the models available for stock assessment and where we are in the Gulf.

**Powell** recommended starting at the beginning, immediately setting up the fact that this is a “data poor species” and the explanation of what that means. He then recommended a broad overview of the goals of stock assessment in general, noting the two primary reference points; 1) Biological Goals (Spawning Stock Biomass and MSY) and 2) Management or Fisheries Goals (maximum sustainable fisheries yield or  $M_{FSY}$ ). **Powell** recommended presenting the modeling options for each of the two goals. He also warned that we must be clear when discussing the goals throughout the introduction. Both reference point approaches require similar population dynamics data but use the information for very different purposes and the goals must be clearly identified.

Biological Goals

SSB and MSY typically need very detailed models. A good example is the NEFSC’s summer flounder reference Terceiro, M. 2006 which uses the Age Structured Assessment Program Model or **ASAP**. Working down in a simplification of models, the next would be the **Schaeffer-type** models using surplus production. **Powell**’s 2009 publication in Fish Bull is a good example. It’s simpler than the **ASAP** model but still needs a good time-series of data. The next level model is the one being developed by **Soniat** which is a more volume-based model. It requires some knowledge about the efficiency of the gear which, in the case of dredges, requires a precautionary assumption of 100%. With the **Soniat** model, there is a constant abundance goal. This can be split to include both market or sack fishery and a seed fishery. The model allows the user to maintain the current abundance levels in the population. Finally, the simplest model uses

**stock performance** reference points. It looks at a time series of abundance and the median level becomes the goal. This is the most remedial approach.

**Powell** believes that the Soniat model is the best for the data poor population in the Gulf.

### Fisheries Goals

Again, starting at the best option which requires the most data is to calculate the  $M_{FSY}$  from the ASAP model. This is actually impossible in oysters and doesn't even work on Delaware Bay; the data elements are just inadequate. The second option is to calculate a **fishing rate** to achieve a constant abundance. This is what the Soniat model does. Lastly, one could simply look at the **exploitation rate** reference point which is what the model in Powell 2010 does. If you calculate the exploitation rates and removals, the median becomes the goal. The Klinck<sup>1</sup> model is a good example of this approach.

The Soniat model has been developed to look at the public reefs in Louisiana's Breton Sound. In the model, shell resource is important. The model has constant shell and abundance goals. The nice thing is that the Soniat model can handle both the seed and sack fisheries, independently or simultaneously. There is a requirement to have some value of natural mortality, however, and some sort of VonBert growth. **Powell** pointed out that, even in Delaware Bay, the use of the Klinck model tends to overestimate the available resource for harvest. **Powell** believes this is due to an incorrect relative growth rate estimate. Even though the models work well, they should still be compared to other models to see the relative performance.

**Soniat** indicated a willingness to share his model and how it works with **Fulford** if we want to try using the Calcasieu Lake data in the model. **Powell** also offered help in tweaking the programming to fit our data better if needed. **Fulford** would be in contact with **Soniat** and work with him to see how the model fits our needs.

### Section 11 Timeline


After further discussion, **Fulford** and **Arnold** agreed to a deadline of *Friday, April 30*, for revising of the current draft to fit with the Conference Call discussions. The Apalachicola data (Site B) would be included as the example for the simple reference points while the Calcasieu data (Site A) would be incorporated into the Soniat and Klinck models. In addition, if the Breton Sound analysis proved interesting, it would also be noted as another use for the Soniat model in a more open system. Some of the alternative models currently provided in the introduction would be moved to the end of the section as a supplemental-type approach for the states to use in the future, should monitoring and data collection begin to provide more robust information for other models.

With no more business, the call/webinar ended at 10:25 a.m.

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<sup>1</sup> Klinck, J. M., E. N. Powell, J. N. Kraeuter, S. E. Ford, and K. A. Ashton-Alcox. 2001. A fisheries model for managing the oyster fishery during times of disease. *J. Shellfish Res.* 20:977-989.

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES  
Tuesday and Wednesday, April 27-28, 2010  
Gulfport, Mississippi**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
10/27/2010

Chairman Ron Lukens 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  
Diane Altsman, EPA GOMP, Stennis Space Center, MS  
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  
Lisa Gonzalez, HARC, The Woodlands, TX  
Leslie Hartman, TPWD, Palacios, TX  
Jeffrey Herod, FWS, Atlanta, GA  
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  
Herb Kumpf, At-Large Member, Panama City, FL  
Susan McCarthy, FDA, Dauphin Island, AL  
Roberto Mendoza, UANL, Monterrey, MX  
Doug Nemeth, US Navy, Jacksonville, FL  
Martin O'Connell, UNO, New Orleans, LA  
Marilyn Barrett O'Leary, At-Large Member, Pontchatoula, LA  
Ron Lukens, At-Large Member, High Springs, FL  
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**

Jason Dallard, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Jon Lane, US Army COE, Jacksonville, FL  
Charles Lester, USCG, New Orleans, LA  
Greg Morris, US Customs, Gulfport, MS  
Michael Pursley, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Naitram Ramnanan, CABI, Trinidad & Tobago

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**Public Comment**

Chairman Ron Lukens provided the opportunity for public comment. No public comments were received.

**Review and Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted as presented.

**Review and Approval of Minutes (11/10-11/2009, Raleigh, NC)**

Due to technical difficulties with the recordings, the minutes were deferred to a later date.

**Monitoring and Eradication of Invasive Aquatic Plants in South Mississippi**

Michael Pursley, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

Invasive Aquatic Species - Why Should We Care?

- Water Use Losses
  - Boating, Fishing, Swimming Access Hindered
  - Pumping Water for Domestic and Agricultural Uses Reduced
  - Native and Threatened/Endangered Species Displaced
- 1.4 Trillion Dollars in Losses/Year Worldwide
- Second Largest Threat to Biodiversity
  - Over 15,000 species threatened worldwide with extinction
  - Over 1,200 in North America

Characteristics of Non-Native Invasive Plants

- Able to Establish in Natural Areas
- Rapid and Aggressive Growth
- High Rate of Reproduction
- Spreads Easily
- No Diseases or Predators

How Do Invasive Species "Get Here"?

- Shipping
- Intentional Introduction
- Nursery Industry

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- Anglers/Bait Industry
- Aquarium/Water Garden Trade
- Natural Dispersal

Common Invasive Plant Species of South Mississippi

- Giant Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*)
- Common Salvinia (*Salvinia minima*)
- Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*)
- Chinese Tallow (*Triadica sebifera*)
- Cogon Grass (*Imperata cylindrica*)
- Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*)
- Parrot Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*)
- Alligator Weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*)
- Torpedo Grass (*Panicum repens*)
- Giant Reed (*Arundo donax*)
- Invasive Roses (*Rosa spp.*)
- Japanese Climbing Fern (*Lygodium japonicum*)
- Kudzu (*Pueraria montana*)
- Eurasian Watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

Monitoring for Invasive Plants

- Boat Surveys
  - Presence/Absence Point Sampling
  - Plant Area Mapping
- Land Surveys
  - Presence/Absence Point Sampling
  - Plant Area Mapping
  - Transect Surveys
- Aerial Surveys
  - Large Area Coverage
  - Follow-Up Boat or Land Survey

Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR)

- Surveying and Monitoring Program
- Goal is to Find Plants at Early Stages of Invasion
- Less Damage to Environment
- More Cost Efficient Than Eliminating Widespread Problem

Cost of Invasive Aquatic Plant Control



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- Florida spent \$27 million in 2006 on AIS control efforts
- LDWF spending \$12 million/year on giant salvinia control
- OTA estimates national cost of AIS control = \$135 million
- Early detection and rapid action essential to minimize control costs and protect coastal Mississippi's economic interests.

**Current EDRR Objectives**

- Control and eliminate, if possible, giant salvinia from the Pascagoula River
- Manage common salvinia population outbreak in the Bogue Houma (Pearl River)
- Early detection and control of new AIS
- Spray less noxious invasives where control is feasible
- Yearly mapping of AIS in the survey area.

**Effects of Hurricane Katrina on Giant Salvinia**

- Tidal surge stranded salvinia on land, in trees and on structures
- Increased salinity killed much of existing infestation
- Concern that storm may have spread salvinia to new areas
- Surviving salvinia was rapidly re-infesting area
- Reduce population provided a window of opportunity for control.

**Post Katrina Pascagoula River Mapping Project**

- Summer, 2006
- Exhaustive aquatic invasive plant inventory
- Thales mobile mapping device
- Point search every 1,000 ft.
- Recorded - Water temperature, salinity and all invasive plants encountered
- Logged 3,300 points, surveyed 400 miles in 37 field days.

**Large-Scale Experimental Farming of Salvinia Weevils**

- Started in 2008
- Cooperative effort between private landowner, state agency and university
- To date, over 54 million weevils have been released
- Reduction in salvinia biomass already apparent
- Long term results.

**Current Giant Salvinia Control Efforts**

- Known areas surveyed and sprayed every 10-14 days

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- Former areas surveyed monthly
- Quarterly low-altitude aerial surveys provide a view of inaccessible areas
- All waterways in South Mississippi now being regularly surveyed for aquatic invasive species
- AIS mapping using tablet PC w/GPS and ArcPaD 7.1 underway.

**Avoiding Spread of Invasive Plants**

- Clean radiators, screens, and equipment parts that collect seed or come into contact with soil or rhizomes.
- Inspect all sources of off-site material such as soil, gravel, and mulch before allowing on property.
- Establish central staging areas to allow easy inspection and monitoring of equipment and materials for the introduction of invasive species.

**Model-Based Projection of Nile Tilapia's (*Oreochromis niloticus*) Invasive Ability in Coastal Mississippi**

Mark Peterson, University of Southern Mississippi

**Objectives:**

1. Physiological Tolerances
2. Model Projections

**Methods:**

- Nile tilapia from Robinson Bayou, MS (Pascagoula River)
- Summer (29.4 C 1.1 SD) and Winter (13.9 C 0.3 SD)
- 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, and 70% salinity
- 12 fish per treatment in summer (n=192)
- 10 fish per treatment in winter (n=176)
- Mortality (both sexes)
  - Kaplan-Meier estimator
    - Log-rank test
- Female growth (g BW•day<sup>-1</sup>)
  - Kruska-Wallis
    - Mann-Whitney U tests
- Female Gonado-Somatic Index (GSI)
  - One-way ANOVA
    - Adjusted for final body mass (g)
  - Relative oocyte abundance and batch fecundity
    - Relative batch fecundity mirrored GSI

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- Logistic Regression
  - Survival
    - 1 = survived
    - 0 = died
  - Growth
    - 1 = positive growth
    - 0 = negative growth
  - Reproduction
    - 1 = GSI > 1.8
    - 0 = GSI < 1.8
  - Biologically relevant thresholds
    - Minimum probability for each variable
- Salinity and Temperature Data
  - Multiple data sources (GCRL, MS-DEQ, MS-DMR, and USGS)
  - 1992-2009
- Universal Kriging
  - Two separate salinity maps
    - Summer (27.5 - 32.5°C)
    - Winter (12.5 - 17.5°C)
  - $P(x)$  of survival (S), growth (G), and reproduction ®  
where,  $P(x) = \frac{\exp(\alpha + \text{salinity} \cdot \beta)}{1 + \exp(\alpha + \text{salinity} \cdot \beta)}$
  - Biologically relevant threshold

Summary

- Broad range of physiological tolerances
  - Survival
    - 40 ppt in the summer
    - Enhanced at 10 ppt in the winter
  - Grow and reproduce equally well in salinities up to 20 ppt in the summer
    - Stressed during winter
- Few areas in the Sound that Nile tilapia can not survive or grow in the summer
  - Reproduction limited to lower salinity
  - Ditto for winter survival.

Funding Agencies

- Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 4
- U.S. Geological Survey Invasive Species Program.

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**Overview of CABI's Invasive Species Programs**

Naitram (Bob) Ramnanan gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Mitigating the Threats of Invasive Alien Species in the Insular Caribbean - A Framework for Regional Cooperation".

Importance of Caribbean Biodiversity

- Spans 4.31 million km<sup>2</sup> of ocean and just 0.26 million km<sup>2</sup> of land area.
- Encompasses most island groups in the Caribbean Sea and extends to southern tip of Florida
- Contains habitats of international biodiversity and conservation value
- High level of endemism
  - 60 spp. of corals
  - 25% of the 1500 fish species
- Caribbean "biodiversity hotspot"
- Ramsar and UNESCO World heritage sites
- Ecosystems provide services, food security and support vital industries, e.g. agriculture, fisheries, tourism
- Global connectivity, especially of marine ecosystems.

Caribbean Vulnerability to IAS

- Geo-physical and ecological
- Political, social and economic
- Multiplicity of pathways
  - Growing numbers of tourists
  - High volume of traded commodities
  - Increase in leisure, commercial, air and sea traffic
  - Deliberate introduction of ornamental plants, pets and aquaculture organisms
- Inadequate capacity and linkages between key stakeholders
- Influence by trading partners.

Assessment of Caribbean Alien Species

- Kairo et al. (2003) reported 552 alien species in insular Caribbean
  - 449 terrestrial (390 naturalized/invasive)
  - 55 freshwater (10 naturalized/invasive)
  - 18 marine (16 naturalized/invasive)
  - Acknowledged: serious knowledge gaps in all areas, particularly aquatic (marine, freshwater) ecosystems
- Lopez & Krauss (2006) reported 118 marine species (based on a 2006 review of the Wider Caribbean), including:

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- 39 fish
- 31 arthropods
- 15 molluscs
- 14 microalgae

**IAS Priorities Defined:**

In 2002-2003, CAB International (CABI), in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) undertook a project "Invasive Species Threats in the Caribbean Region".

The report (Kairo et al. 2003) identified the following priority areas:

- Development of national and regional policies and strategies
- Specific action plans to deal with present and potential problems in terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems.
- A framework for exchange of information, in particular networking with existing/ongoing or proposed projects/activities
- Access to information:
  - Strengthening existing national/regional mechanisms; Or
  - Creation/development of a specific initiatives focused on the Caribbean
- Capacity building (prevention/management of IAS, taxonomy)
- Regulatory and legislative frameworks: awareness-raising among policy and decision makers
- Global linkages (Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP), International Maritime Organization (IMO) etc.

Development of a Proposal for Funding by the Global Environment Facility - Activities began in 2003, with consultations to develop partnerships and linkages.

- Global
- Regional agencies, including the Caribbean Invasive Species Working Group
- National organizations - Ministry of Agriculture/Environment and related agencies, in particular GEF Focal Points in the countries that expressed an interest in participating in the project.

**Project Goal and Objective**

**Goal:** The project goal is to conserve globally important ecosystems, the species and genetic diversity within the insular Caribbean.

**Objective:** The project objective is to mitigate the threat to local biodiversity and economy from IAS in the insular Caribbean.

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Relevance of GEF Initiative to Wider Caribbean

- Regional approach to tackle IAS issues
- Co-operation and linkages to facilitate information exchange
- Support ongoing/future IAS initiatives in the region
- Strengthen position to develop national/collective IAS strategies
- Opportunity for countries to contribute to the region-wide IAS strategy to be developed.

Mitigating the Threats of Invasive Alien Species in the Insular Caribbean: Regional Strategy

- Regional IAS Strategies for Marine, Terrestrial and Aquatic IAS that recognize the economic, ecological and political complexities in the region will be developed in collaboration with international, regional and national stakeholders.
- The Regional Strategy will build on individual and national strategies and expand the draft Caribbean Regional Invasive Species Intervention Strategy (CRISIS) document, which deals primarily with agricultural pests and diseases.
- Three separate Regional Consultations will be held in this regard by the end of 2010.

Over the next four years the project will:

- Establish a National IAS Steering Committee
- Develop a Draft National IAS Strategy for the Dominican Republic
- Conduct baseline surveys for flora and fauna in the two pilot sites
- Devise eradication strategies for IAS identified above.

**Port of Gulfport Cargo Inspection Process - Prevention of Invasive Species**

Greg Morris, Agriculture Specialist

U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Gulfport, MS

Imports into Gulfport

- Produce from Central and South America
  - Bananas
  - Plantains
  - Pineapples
  - Peanuts
- Clothing
- Ore
  - Usually from Australia, South Africa, and Mexico

Inspection Processes

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- Tailgating
- Ship's Stores
- 100% Stripout of Cargo (if needed)
- Monitor Proper Disposal of Garbage
  - Done with ships and aircraft arriving from foreign.

**What They Look For**

- Wood Boring Insects
  - Two of the Most Important
    - Emerald Ash Borer
    - Asian Long Horn Beetle
- ALL Wood Packing Material with Cargo Must Have IPPC Stamp to Prove Heat Treatment.
- Inspections of Stores, Food, and Garbage on Ships and International Flights Look for Fruit or Vegetables that Could Be a Host for Insects.
  - Usually tropical and subtropical fruits such as citrus fruits, peaches, pears and apples.
  - Biggest threat is the Mediterranean Fruit Fly.

**Prohibited Stores and Foreign Garbage**

- If any of the stores on ships are considered fruit fly hosts, the stores are immediately sealed. The crew can only open sealed stores once ship has exited U.S. waters.
- Ships must keep log of garbage disposal at foreign ports. The log is checked by CBP AG Specialists upon arrival in Gulfport.

**Aircraft Stores and Garbage**

- All foreign arriving aircraft must dispose of garbage at USDA approved sites or make arrangements to have garbage picked up by USDA approved companies that incinerate or sterilize the garbage.
- All foreign arriving aircraft and vessels are boarded by CBP AG specialists to ensure these compliances are done.

**Safeguarding Against Animal Disease - Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)**

- The U.S., has been free of FMD since 1929.
- FMD is a virus that causes blisters in the mouths and erosion of the tongues in cattle and swine. However, other cloven-hooved animals can be affected.
- Causes severe losses in meat and milk production.
- One host of FMD is soil from countries that have been known to have had FMD infections.
- Any container that comes from a FMD country into Gulfport that has soil on it is pressure washed to terminate the threat.

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Live or Dead Animals

- Anytime a live or dead animal comes into Gulfport from Foreign on a plane or ship, veterinary services (USDA) is contacted.
- Veterinary services makes the final decision only if the animal is admitted into the U.S.

Inspection of Cargo

- Most produce and dry cargo containers are tailgated.
- If insects are found within or on the containers, the insect is taken to a USDA identifier to determine if the insect is considered a threat to American agriculture.
- If the insect is considered a threat, the container must be fumigated to eliminate the threat or the entire container must be re-exported.

Plant Diseases

- Upon inspection of fruit containers, if any of fruit appear to have any diseases, a sample if sent to a USDA plant pathologist to determine if threat is present.
- If disease is detected, the entire shipment is re-exported or destroyed.

Invasive Plants and Seeds

- While inspecting containers, if any plants or seeds are found, the seeds and plants are sent to a USDA botanist to determine if a threat of an invasive plant is present
- If a threat is found, the container is fumigated or the container must be re-exported.

**Update on New Introductions and Overview of New USGS Website**

Pam Fuller

Changes to NAS website:

- All web page URLs have changed from \*.asp to \*.aspx (please update any bookmarks or links you have)
- New point distribution maps!
  - Ability to zoom, pan, identify points
  - Change backgrounds
  - Add layers (more in the future).

GSARP Area Alerts Since October 2009:

- Green Anaconda - Florida
- Green mussel - Florida, South Carolina
- Chinese myserysnail - Florida
- Charru mussel - South Carolina
- Oriental Westherfish - Alabama, North Carolina, Florida



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- Blackchin tilapia - Florida

Other Areas of the Country

Expansion of:

- Quagga mussels
- Zebra mussels.

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Invasive Species Activities**

Jon Lane, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

USACE Invasive Species Policy (June 2009)

- This policy memorandum is applicable to the entire spectrum of Civil Works programs and projects and meets the spirit of the National Invasive Species Management Plan.
  - Measures to either prevent or reduce establishment of invasive and non-native species will be a component of all Corps Operations and Maintenance (O&M) at project sites as well as a part of implementation of a Civil Works project.
  - Civil Works planning documents will address invasive species concerns in their analysis of project impacts.

Policy Goals & Objectives

- a. Leadership and Coordination: Work strategically, using all Corps scientific, management, and partnership resources in unison to manage invasive species.
- b. Prevention: Prevent introduction and establishment of invasive species to reduce their impact on the environment, economy, and health of the United States.
- c. Early Detection and Rapid Response: Develop and enhance the capacity to identify, report, and effectively respond to newly discovered localized invasive species.
- d. Control and Management: Contain and reduce the spread and populations of established invasive species to minimize their harmful impacts.
- e. Restoration: Restore native species and habitat conditions and rehabilitate high-value ecosystems and key ecological processes that have been impacted by invasive species to meet desired future conditions.
- f. Research: Conduct appropriate research and development activities to ensure management programs are effective and science based. Sound scientific information is critical in guiding management activities, determining the magnitude of invasive species problems, planning future research and management programs, and improving intervention efforts.
- g. Information Management: Implement management actions to track invasive species data.
- h. Education and Public Awareness: Education, communication, and interpretation programs can convey how the public can help prevent, identify, detect, and control invasive species and gather public input into program plans and promote partnerships in their implementation.

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Center of Expertise

- Coordinate and Implement Prevention Strategies
- Coordinate, Standardize and Manage Monitoring and Mapping Efforts
- Perform Risk Analysis for New Species
- Manage and Prioritize Rapid Response Efforts (Strike Team) Interagency
- Participate and Coordinate with the NISC and Other Federal Agencies
- Develop, Integrate and Implement National Training Program.
- Assist the ISLT with Updating ER's and EP's to be Consistent with IS Policy
- Collaborate with ERDC on Research Priorities and Needs
- Facilitate Tech Transfer from ERDC to the Field
- Facilitate Local and Regional Cooperation Between USACE and Other Agencies, NGOs
- Develop Partnerships to Leverage Funding
- Coordinate with CCO or Public Affairs to Execute Public Education and Outreach.

**Sea Grant Invasive Species Activities Update**

Dewayne Hollin discussed the following funding opportunity:

2010 NOAA Sea Grant Aquatic Invasive Species **\*OPEN\***

NOAA Sea Grant will make available \$2,000,000 in 2010 and up to \$2,000,000 in 2011, if appropriations are available, to Sea Grant programs to support integrated projects of research, outreach, extension, education and/or management, addressing regional aquatic invasive species priorities for U.S. coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes areas. This opportunity seeks especially to support projects that address NOAA-relevant regional aquatic invasive species priorities identified by Sea Grant Regional Research Plans, by NOAA Regional Collaboration Teams, by the Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Task Force Regional Panels, and in ANS State Management Plans. Up to eleven projects of median federal funding \$400,000 are anticipated. Some projects selected in this competition may be awarded in 2011 and funded with 2011 funds.

Open to the following Sea Grant Programs and Projects: all Sea Grant Colleges and Institutions, Guam Sea Grant, Lake Champlain Sea Grant, and the National Sea Grant Law Center.

One application is expected per region. Regions are the Sea Grant regions defined in 2006/2008 Regional Research and Information Planning competitions.

Application materials are due **May 17, 2010**.

Proposals may request up to \$400,000 in total. (But proposals addressing multiple regions may request up to \$400,000 times the number of regions.)

50% Non-federal matching funds are required.

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Submit applications to [grants.gov](http://grants.gov).

To obtain the RFP, please visit [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), FFO number NOAA-OAR-SG-2010-2002380.

For more information, please see the [Question-and-Answer webpage](#), or send questions to [invasive.species@noaa.gov](mailto:invasive.species@noaa.gov).

**Invasive Species Activities in Mexico**

Roberto Mendoza

Trinational Risk Assessment Guidelines for Aquatic Alien Invasive Species - Test cases for the snakeheads (*Channidae*) and Armored Catfishes (*Loricariidae*) in North American Inland Waters - Importance:

- At the regional level most efforts have been focused on terrestrial invasive species which have had negative effects on agriculture and human health
- Consequences of intentional or accidental release of aquatic organisms in pristine continental ecosystems were often overlooked
- The CEC, set in motion the Trinational Alien Invasive Species Project
- Trinational consensus was reached to select commercial pathways activities to test the Guidelines
- Aquarium Trade and Live Food were selected as test pathways as they have been recognized internationally and locally as important pathways of potentially invasive fish species.
- Canada agreed to perform the RA with species of the Snakehead group, while Mexico chose to test the Guidelines with species from the Loricariid family.

Lionfish - Confirmed Presence during 2009

- Isla Contoy
- Isla Mujeres
- Cancun
- Cozumel
- Playa del Carmen
- Kantenah
- Sian Ka'an
- Majaual
- Xcalac
- Chinchorro

Collecting Centers

- Only authorized institutions

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- Unify procedures and control techniques
- Data quality control
- Final disposal
- No commercial benefit from captured fishes
- Captures and visual detection reported to Collecting Centers
- Volunteer Monitoring System for early detection of lion fish

Mexico's National Strategy

Strategic Actions

1. Review, adequate and develop the present legal framework.
2. Develop scientific, technical and institutional capabilities.
3. Establish the coordination between and within the government, institutions and the society.
4. Foster divulgation, education and public awareness.
5. Generate sound knowledge for decision taking.

Strategic Objectives

1. Prevent, detect and reduce the risk of introduction, establishment and dispersal of invasive species.
2. Establish control and eradication programs of exotic invasive species to minimize or eliminate their negative impacts.
3. Inform the society in an efficient way, so people can act responsibly in the prevention, control and eradication of invasive species.

Amendment to the Wildlife and Ecology Laws - It Defines an Exotic Invasive Species and:

- Prohibits the importation of exotic invasive species or any other wild species that can carry an exotic invasive species.
- Prohibits the release into the wild of exotic invasive species.
- Mandates the creation of a list of exotic invasive species that has to be reviewed every 3 years
- Mandates the creation of a regulation on prevention of entry of these species, management, control and eradication of those exotic invasives which are already established in Mexico.
- Gives the Economy Ministry the power to control transit of these species inside Mexico.

**Members Forum**

State updates were given for the states of Alabama, Texas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Louisiana. For more information on their program activities, see each state's website.

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**North American Invasive Species Network Workshop Overview**

Don Schmitz

NAISN Pre-Workshop Survey Results  
Centers/Institutes (7)

- 19 Services/programs
- 18 groups of organisms
- 90 full/part-time employees
- All affiliated with universities
- 4 of the 7 have a global audience

Scope of the Network:

Canada, Mexico, and the United States - an all of their protectorates.

Desired Future Condition Statement:

NAISN - A consortium that uses a coordinated network to advance science-based understanding of, an effective response to, non-native invasive species in North America.

Goals:

- A transparent organizational structure.
- Invasive Species Network Hubs act in a coordinated manner.
- NAISN provides reliable resources and services across North America.
- NAISN works across political boundaries in North America.
- NAISN has the resources in place to achieve the DFC.

Committees:

- Alternative Model (NAISN structure) Committee
- Interim NAISN Organizing Committee
- Information Technology Committee
  - NASIN and GISIN Subcommittee

Current Leadership:

- Dr. Robert Leavitt, Chair, Interim NAISN Organizing Committee
- Don C. Schmitz, NAISN Coordinator
- Chuck Barger, Chair, Information & Technology Committee
- Jim Graham, Chair, NAISN and GISIN Subcommittee

Action Items:

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- Organize Regional Network Hubs
- Survey stakeholders and ID gaps
- NAISN 5 Year Strategic Plan

Definition of Invasive Species Network Hub: Regionally-based, thematic-based, and/or taxonomically-based focus of coordinated invasive species management activities that address common needs and pool resources in response to invasive species issues.

Future Services and Actions:

- Invasive Species Watch Lists
- Coordinate and Track Research
- Track Invasive Species Ranges Due to Climate Change
- Define the Invasive Species Problem in NA
- Connect the Databases (GISIN)
- Coordinate Rapid Response

Website: <http://www.naisn.org/>

**Regulating Exotic Aquatic Plants in Texas**

Earl Chilton

Current Status of Exotic Aquatic Plant Regulations

- TPWD has regulatory authority over the importation, possession, sale or placement into water of the state of exotic harmful or potentially harmful aquatic plants.
- TPWD is also authorized to enact rules and issues permits to regulate these activities.
- This authority is granted to TPWD by the Texas Legislature.
- Exotic aquatic plants that have been identified as harmful or potentially harmful are prohibited.
- Plants and rules are listed in TPWD administrative code.
- Some plants can be possessed with a permit (such as water spinach).
- Permits have conditions to minimize environmental risk.

Disadvantages of Current System

- Adding new plants to the list is a lengthy process.
- It is difficult to respond to new threats.
- Non-listed species may be introduced.
- These species can become established before being regulated.
- Environmental damage and economic costs may occur before a species can be listed.

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Development of New Regulations

- During the last Legislative session, TPWD was directed to publish a list of exotic aquatic and riparian plants that are approved for use in Texas without a permit.
- TPWD was further directed to make the rules be as permissive as possible without allowing plants that pose environmental, economic, or health problems.
- New rules are to be in place by January 1, 2011.
- The first step has been to develop list of exotic (non-native) aquatic and riparian plants currently imported into Texas.
- TPWD is currently gathering input from persons and businesses and other entities.
- This input will aid TPWD in adding or deleting plants from the current draft list.
- All plants on the list will be evaluated for potential risk to aquatic environments using a scientific risk analysis based on Pheloung et al. (1999).
- If risk is low, species will be placed on the approved list.
- TPWD will maintain a category for possession of some plants by permit only.

What is an Aquatic Plant?

“An aquatic plant is defined as any member of the Kingdom Plantae, any member of the Kingdom Monera within the Phylum Cyanophycota, or any photosynthetic member of the Kingdom Protista, as documented using the most recent posting of the Integrated Taxonomic Information System, and is often found in either aquatic or riparian habitats.”

Risk Assessment - Conduct a Literature Review That Includes:

- Native Range
- Native Climate
- History of Invasiveness
- Reproductive Requirements, Potential, and Dispersal
- Control Techniques and Efficacy
- Habitat Requirements
- Economic Benefit
- Environmental Impact If Established
- Agricultural Impact If Established
- History in Texas

Timeline

- After risk analysis, a draft approved list will be developed and made available for preliminary public comment in May and June 2010.
- TPWD will modify current rules to establish new procedures for regulating exotic aquatic plants.

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- August 25<sup>th</sup> meeting - present proposed rules.
- November 4<sup>th</sup> meeting - vote to approve proposed rules.
- New Regulations go into effect.
- The process for adding new plants to the list will incorporate risk analyses and Commission approval.

What If A Species Is Not On The List? Exotic Species Permits may be issued for:

- Research
- Public exhibits
- Aquaculture
- Vegetation management
- Wastewater treatment
- Industrial purposes?

**South Atlantic Council's Invasive Species Activities**

Ron Lukens reported that he, Jim Morris, and James Ballard worked with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and developed a document (distributed) entitled "Policies for the Protection of South Atlantic Ecosystems from Invasive Species". This document establishes the policies of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council regarding protection of South Atlantic ecosystems from potential impacts associated with invasive species. The policies are designed to be consistent with the overall habitat protection policies of the Council as formulated in the Habitat Plan (SAFMC 1998a) and adopted in the Comprehensive EFH Amendment (SAFMC 1998b) and the various Fishery Management Plans of the Council. The document is being sent to several advisory panels of the South Atlantic Council and will be considered for adoption at the upcoming meeting.

After some discussion, the Panel agreed with supporting this document. Lukens also indicated that he would encourage the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council to consider a similar document.

Lukens also asked if the Panel could develop a background paper on orange cut coral to provide that information to the South Atlantic Council. The Panel agreed and indicated it would be a good work group session agenda item.

**Invasive Species Public Awareness Campaign - Stopping the Spread of Giant Salvinia**

Earl Chilton/Leslie Hartman

Invasive Species Campaign



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- 2009 Sunset Commission raised issue of exotic aquatic plants and directed the Department to: “provide greater information to the public on the harm caused by releasing exotic species.”
- Giant Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) the first species to be addressed.
- But we need your help.

**Giant Salvinia Campaign**

- Public Awareness Campaign
  - Primarily in East Texas
  - Focus at the Following Lakes:
    - Toledo Bend Reservoir
    - Caddo Lake
    - Lake Sam Rayburn
    - Lake Conroe
- Strategy: Multi-media Campaign
  - On-the-Ground
  - Broadcast and Print
  - Online
  - TPWD Vehicles
  - Fishing Events
  - Media Events

**Website**

- [www.texasinvasives.org](http://www.texasinvasives.org)
  - Partnership with Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
- New Features
  - Invasives 101
  - Eco-Alerts by Region

**Media Events**

- Kickoff News Conference - April 1
  - Carter Smith and TPW Commissioners to announce the launch of the Giant Salvinia Public Awareness Campaign at Lake Austin boat ramp
- Media Tours/Field Days
  - Sheldon Lake
  - Caddo Lake
  - North Toledo Bend

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**Invasive Species Advisory Committee Update**

Earl Chilton

During the December 2009 ISAC meeting in Washington, DC the following action items and recommendations that may affect aquatic plant management were discussed and proposed:

1. Recommendation 2 (from the Research and Information Management Subcommittee):

Federal support for research on the management of invasive species in natural systems.

ISAC recommends that NISC agencies develop strategic plans and implement mechanisms for sustained support of research on the management of invasive species in natural systems, including prevention, control, and restoration. Agencies might approach this by broadening the scope of existing programs, reallocating resources between or within programs, or adopting policies for the consistent inclusion of management of invasive species in requests for proposals for research on natural ecosystems.

2. Recommendation 4 (from the Control and Management Subcommittee):

ISAC recommends that federal biological control programs, as well as research performance measures, incorporate IPM principles with the goal of achieving the greatest potential for successful management of the target pest, while maximizing the desired ecosystem functions and other appropriate management objectives. This includes incorporating niche based modeling, monitoring procedures, efficient data access, and integration with other control options and/or active restoration efforts, where necessary.

Additionally, ISAC members have drafted a paper on the biofuel and invasive species.

**Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force Update**

James Ballard discussed current activities of the ANSTF:

- Discussed three RFPs: 1) \$1.075 million for state/interstate plan implementation funding (proposals supporting almost all of ANSTF-approved plans were received), 2) \$600,000 for quagga/zebra projects identified in state/interstate plans (proposals supporting around 60% of the plans were received), and 3) \$600,000 to support three priorities in QZAP (these are due by April 19).
- Developed a QZAP Federal coordination team. This team will oversee coordination of QZAP at the federal level.

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- Developed a letter for the ANSTF co-chairs to send to the heads of the ANSTF Federal member agencies, encouraging support for QZAP implementation.
- Working with FWS Office of Legislative Affairs to schedule a QZAP briefing with Senator Feinstein's staff.
- The ANSTF co-chairs began meeting with ANSTF members individually to discuss means of increasing coordination and ANSTF effectiveness,
- The ANSTF website is being updated.
- HAACP training was provided to Washington Office NOAA and FWS personnel.
- Disseminated approval letters for the new Utah, MN, Lake Tahoe, and SC ANSTF-approved plans.
- Provided a presentation on the ANSTF at National Invasive Species Awareness Week.
- The FWS Branch of Aquatic Invasive Species has a Knauss Fellow for a year who is helping to address ANSTF tasks, including following up on implementing the ANSTF Strategic Plan priorities developed at the fall 2009 ANSTF meeting.
- Reviewed the draft MS state ANS plan and submitted comments to them.
- Prepared for the May ANSTF meeting in Portland, Maine.

**Overview of Revised Rapid Response Plan**

Leslie Hartman provided a PowerPoint presentation on the revised rapid response plan. Dennis Riecke, Don Schmitz, and Marilyn O'Leary agreed to help with the review process. All other states were encouraged to review the document and provide comments to Leslie.

**Recruiting Service Organizations as Monitors for Non-native Species**

Chuck Jacoby

**Augmenting Early Detection Systems with Volunteers - Outline**

- Brief History
- ED Guidelines
- Care & Feeding of Volunteers
- Musings on an Approach
  - Targets

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- The Hook
- Process
- Question - What can/will we do as a Panel and via our organizations.

**Discussion of the GSARP's 2010-2014 Strategic Plan**

Ballard mentioned that the Strategic Plan was thoroughly reviewed at the last meeting. All changes have been incorporated and the document has been available on the Internet for review. He also added that this is a living document and subject to change as needed.

**Paul Carangelo made a motion to approve the GSARP 2010-2014 Strategic Plan. The motion was seconded by Dewayne Hollin and approved unanimously.**

**Work Group Membership**

Membership on the Panel Work Groups were reviewed and amended. Current membership is as follows:

**Pathways/Prevention**

**Pam Fuller: Chairman**

Earl Chilton  
Pam Fuller  
Dennis Riecke  
Harriet Perry  
Paul Carangelo  
Don Schmitz  
Nicole Cass  
Tom Jackson  
Jeff Herod  
Keith Weaver

**Eradication/Control/Restoration**

Earl Chilton  
Roberto Mendoza  
Ralph Allemand  
George Ramseur  
John Teem  
C. Furqueron

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**Research/Development  
John Teem: Chairman**

Herb Kumpf  
Pam Fuller  
Marty O'Connell  
Leslie Hartman  
John Teem  
Harriet Perry  
Earl Chilton  
David Knott  
James Morris  
Don Schmitz  
Jacoby Carter  
Diane Altsman  
Susan McCarthy

**Education/Outreach  
Chuck Jacoby: Chair**

Don Schmitz  
Marilyn O'Leary  
Lisa Gonzalez  
Chuck Jacoby  
Roberto Mendoza  
Herb Kumpf  
Dewayne Hollin  
Jeff Herod

**Early Detection/Rapid Response**

Pam Fuller  
Marty O'Connell  
Paul Carangelo  
Scot Hardin  
Chuck Jacoby  
Harriet Perry  
Leslie Hartman  
Earl Chilton  
Marilyn O'Leary  
David Knott  
Mike Brainard

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Dennis Riecke  
Chris Furqueron  
Ralph Allemand

**Information Management**

Don Schmitz  
Pam Fuller  
Ron Lukens  
James Ballard  
Mike Brainard

**Other Business**

The Panel discussed the vacant seat formerly held by David Yeager. Nominations will be held at the next meeting. Ballard ask that Panel members contact anyone they wish to nominate to be sure they will be willing to serve.

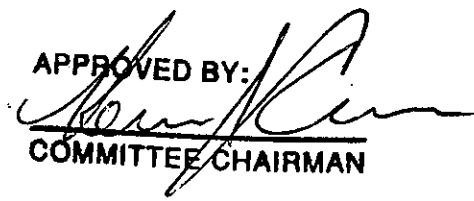
**Next Meeting Time and Place**

The Panel agreed that St. Petersburg, Florida would be the next meeting location at the end of October 2010.

**Public Comment**

Chairman Ron Lukens 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.***

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**FISHERIES INFORMATION NETWORK (FIN)  
MINUTES  
June 9, 2010  
San Antonio, TX**

Chairman **K. Cuevas** called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following members, staff, and others were present:

**Members**

- Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL
- John Froeschke, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
- Craig Lilyestrom, PRDNER, San Juan, PR
- Dave Gloeckner (proxy for G. Davenport), NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort Lab, NC
- Christine Murrell, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
- Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
- Vicki Swann, TPWD, Austin, TX
- Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
- Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX
- Tom Sminkey, NOAA/ NMFS, Silver Spring, MD
- Richard Cody, FFWCC, St. Petersburg, FL
- Ken Brennan, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort Lab, NC

**Staff**

- David Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
- Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
- Donna Bellais, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
- Alex Miller, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
- Janet Lumpkin, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

- Chris Robbins, Ocean Conservancy, Austin, TX
- David McCarron, IA-Team,
- Cindy Bohannon, TPWD, Dickinson, TX
- Justin Esslinger, TPWD, Rockport, TX
- Geoff White, ACCSP, Washington, DC
- Tom Fazio, REI, Herndon, VA
- Shell Sanders, REI, Herndon, VA

**Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as presented.

## Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Fisheries Information Network (FIN) meeting held on June 10, 2009 in Savannah, GA 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** noted a budget cut by ACCSP allocation by \$140,000 which caused change in salaries and delayed equipment and network upgrades. In-person meetings are also being affected by the budget cuts, which resulted in conducting web-x meetings. **White** is hoping to maintain funding for next year.

**White** reported The ACCSP Data Warehouse includes historical commercial catch and effort data from as far back as 1950. Several partners implemented improvements to their data collection programs. They have a goal to update the history of the data and to validate the date of verification. For a more up to date and flexible system, **White** stated there are Discoverer queries for partners to log in and check information and that confidentiality management is improving by only showing users data records they are allowed to view.

**White** noted upgrades to the SAFIS electronic dealer and fisherman reporting tool. The interface is now using application express, and includes integration with eTrips and management interface (SMS). ACCSP is working with South Carolina and Georgia to deploy electronic dealer reporting. eTrips is being rolled out to Maryland for their charter and head boats to evaluate and utilize. There has been positive feedback. Also of note, ACCSP is upgrading to Oracle 10.2.0.4 and Oracle Discoverer 10.1.2.3 and have increased bandwidths from a T1 line to a 10M Ethernet which reduced complaints from users.

**White** stated there is an annual report posted on ACCSP's website. They instituted a quarterly news flash to push information on the happenings within ACCSP to partners, users, dealers, and fishermen. ACCSP TV can be found on the website and includes a series of interviews with fisheries people. Electronic reporting in the Southeast and the Gulf of Mexico are up-and-coming activities. The MRIP logbook pilot is looking at using the SAFIS electronic vessel trip reporting for charter and head boats.

## 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.

Status of the FIN DMS - **D. Bellais** reported on the status of the FIN DMS noting that the standing item of the Oracle Discoverer public access tracking continues to be proceeding quickly. State partners continue to update and enter metadata into the InPort system. Louisiana has recently published their information and other states were encouraged to publish their information too. **Bellais** gave an update on record counts in the FIN DMS for commercial landings. **Bellais** reported of one change: Texas sent 2008 trip ticket data, error reports were sent back for correction, and they are close to having records in the FIN system. Louisiana's recreational fishing license data continues to be loaded by wave. NMFS has access to the data and they continue to publish their findings. FIN has contracted Information Architecture Team (IA-Team) to gather and format commercial vessel data from the States. IA-Team is still



awaiting vessel data from Alabama. Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida have provided data and IA is proceeding with this data for now. FIN has provided IA with a test server for the regional Gulf FOSS. IA-Team continues to test the loading procedures for the Operating System, Oracle Database and FOSS software. The FIN databases will soon be upgraded to Oracle 11G and moved to new servers with more CPU, disk space, and memory. Oracle Discoverer and forms will also be upgraded to 11G. **Bellais** gave a review on biological sampling data, marine recreational fishery catch estimates, marine recreational fishery effort estimates, and menhaden data.

### **Discussion of Preliminary Results from Facilitated Session**

**T. Fazio** provided a brief summary of the facilitated session that took place on June 8, 2010. The day was taken to examine the progress over the last few years of FIN strategic initiatives. The committee started with a review of the initiatives that were compiled in the 2004 session in Puerto Rico. The group reviewed the progress made by FIN over the past 5 years and identified areas of work that required further research.

**Fazio** then led the group through the process of identifying new areas of research that would help guide FIN over the next 5 years. At the end of the facilitated session, a scoring exercise was completed by all participants. Each person was provided 10 votes that could be allocated to any one or combination of the new research initiatives. The purpose was to get a sense of relative priorities from the group. **Fazio** presented the results of the findings to the FIN committee. The highest ranked research priorities were full implementation of a trip ticket system in Mississippi and the US Virgin Islands, refine area fished by providing more detail about where fishing is occurring, and refine protocols for recreational sampling using smaller geographic regions. The full report from the facilitated session will be provided to the FIN Administrative Subcommittee for review.

### **Preliminary Results from Economic Inshore Shrimp Project**

**A. Miller** gave a presentation on the economic status, performance, and impacts of the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery in 2008. **Miller** gave the background on how and why the collection of economic data from the shrimp industry started. Two surveys were conducted in 2008, the inshore and offshore surveys. **Miller** described the survey population, sampling frame, and implementation. The survey results are reported per vessel and extrapolated to the entire fleet. Results for the fleet were subsequently used to determine the impact that the industry has on the regional economy. **Miller** pointed out that the shrimping industry in the Gulf of Mexico is one of the biggest in the Southeast yet the economic data collected has historically been very low. There has been no organized and uniform effort to collect economic data in the past from this industry throughout the Region. The amount of landed pounds in the industry has remained the same for the past 35 years but the nominal (non-inflation adjusted) revenue is only slightly moving up. The real price (inflation adjusted revenue) is 40% lower than in the 1970's. More economic data and analysis could have helped with mitigating the great decline which is likely a result from imported shrimp.

### **Review and Discussion of SEDAR Recommendations Document**

The FIN committee reviewed the findings from SEDAR's 13- 16. **Donaldson** explained that FIN has routinely provided a response letter back to SEDAR explaining the ways FIN is addressing specific areas of concern from the SEDAR review process. The FIN

committee identified a few areas where current and future research is addressing some concerns and needs outlined by the SEDAR reviews. FIN will produce another response letter later in 2010 to John Carmichael explaining how FIN is working towards addressing these specific issues.

### **Discussion of MRIP HMS**

**G. Bray** informed the committee of the two reports: "Characterization of Rod and Reel Highly Migratory Species Fisheries in the U.S. South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico" and "Florida Highly Migratory Species Private Angler Telephone Survey Final Report." The general goal is that FIN has been tasked with taking the findings from these documents and trying to come up with a decision of what to do, if anything, with future HMS sampling in the Gulf of Mexico.

**R. Cody** gave some background on the research done in Florida to collect catch and effort information from the private boat HMS fleet. Their research included 6,000 HMS permits and 244 vessel permits for the general category. It was conducted for over a year and **Cody** discussed their major findings and recommendations. **Cody** noted that **MRFSS** does an adequate job for some species and for some locations as well. Missing data includes private trips that are not covered by the **MRFSS** and trips that come back after **MRFSS** sampling hours. There is some opportunity to access private access trips in the field classifying vessels as public or private access doing field intercepts at fuel docks. There are recommendations for better tournament coverage because they account for a sizeable portion of the overall HMS catch. It is believed that the best option would be to do a specialized survey to monitor the catch for marlin, swordfish, and yellowfin tuna. Utilization of the HMS permit list as a sample frame along with a dual-frame approach was also suggested. A cost analysis was recommended to be necessary because of the HMS fishery is concentrated in small geographic locations and the cost associated with developing a specialized survey to target certain species might be cost prohibited.

**Donaldson** noted that the methodology studied seems to get a better handle on catch and effort and is an improvement. **Cody** agreed on the improvement for most species.

Personnel issues were discussed and the question of control of the research done by the states or independent contractors came up. Under current circumstances, the committee agreed that they could not take on any additional work. The states agreed that they would rather handle the survey as opposed to hiring contractors. Head count issues arose in Louisiana and contract workers would be needed. This was the case for the majority of the committee. After much discussion, **Donaldson** recommended FIN should focus HMS research throughout the Gulf of Mexico for both private as well as for-hire, identifying those areas of concern, coming up with a general cost, and waiting to see what happens with the private access project and regionalization of the different states. **M. Kasprzak** moved to forward the research question to the **FIN Recreational Technical work group**. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

### **Integration of Commercial and Recreational Databases not in FIN DMS**

**D. Donaldson** stated this topic is related to the regional FOSS (Fisheries One Stop Shop) project and using regional programs to support the national FIS (Fisheries Information System.) We are trying to make the FIN DMS the "go-to" data spot for the Gulf of Mexico and the Committee needs to identify pertinent databases that are currently not included in the FIN DMS.

**P. Campbell** suggested looking to see what other datasets are available that can be shared with FIN DMS and see if it can be included. **M. Kasprzak** noted that it is easier for the managers in the state to have one place to go for data requests. She suggested tasking a

workgroup with identifying the databases and finding out the procedures and including them. **Donaldson** said the problem is, after identifying the databases, how to determine which database to use. Conversion to standard coding schemes was also brought up as an issue by **R. Cody**. **Donaldson** said that the purpose of the DMS was to put everything into a standard FIN format. **G. Bray** brought up the issue of housing data that is not collected with similar QA/QC standards as FIN. He believes that there is a quality associated with the product that is being shared and there should be a level of QC there. **Kasprzak** brought up tasking the committee with determining QA/QC standards along with the databases. **Bray** agreed and thinks that if the data is to be housed in FIN, it needs to meet some QA/QC standards. **Donaldson** suggested making sure enough information is there for a workgroup so a useful product can be provided and evaluating the databases for inclusion. **D. Donaldson moved to have the FIN Committee charge the Gulf Geographic Subcommittee to evaluate data that is used in the assessments for inclusion in the FIN DMS and evaluate those data on its completeness, level of QA/QC, and its importance in assessments.**

### **Gulf Council Issues**

**J. Froeschke** gave a brief summary of the AP meeting and updated the FIN Committee on the Council motions.

Update on AD Hoc Data Collection AP meeting - The Ad Hoc Data Collection committee met March 29-30, 2010 at the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council office to discuss methods for improvement of timeliness and accuracy of catch data for the commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishery sectors in the Gulf of Mexico. They discussed software and database problems and data collection capabilities. The consensus was that there is adequate technology to get the system going if they choose to go that route. At the end of the two day meeting, they passed around 15 motions to the council.

Update on recreational data collection motion - The most pertinent motion at the AP meeting was recommending the development and implementation of electronic based data collection systems for the federally permitted fishers by 1/1/11. Several presentations prompted vigorous discussion and prompted several motions. These motions and materials were taken to the council meetings held in April; they were discussed at the committee and council levels and voted on. Most of the discussion centered on the existing (Marine Recreational Information Program) MRIP pilot program. At the committee level, their motion was to request that NMFS implement using existing authority to develop a mandatory enforceable and validated electronic reporting system for the federally permitted Gulf of Mexico for-hire sector by January 2012. Subsequently, when brought to full council, this date was changed to 2011.

At the conclusion, a series of letters were written addressing all motions and sent to NMFS. An additional AP meeting is to be held in August 2010 in Tampa, FL and will focus on private, recreational anglers and potential development of electronic data collection systems. **Froeschke** has expectations of participation from the law enforcement and recreational anglers to solicit their ideas.

### **Impacts of Magnuson-Stevens Act on Biologic Sampling**

**D. Donaldson** discussed that with the introduction of annual catch limits (ACLs) and stricter management regulations that have come out of the latest Magnuson-Stevens Act it is getting more difficult to representatively collect biological samples with fishery dependent sampling. **R. Cody** mentioned Florida is targeting more at-sea trips to get biological samples

because the opportunity of getting dockside samples is not as good as it used to be. Outside of that, they go into directive sampling and getting on boats that are not normally fishing at that time of year, so it's really fishery independent sampling. **Donaldson** mentioned that SEAMAP has recently talked about collecting biological samples so that would be a good resource for fishery independent samples. FIN likely would not want to get involved with a coordinated fishery independent collection program. **Cody** also mentioned SEDAR's need for better biological sampling and it's probably going to heavily impact some of the age data used in the SEDAR process. **Donaldson** believes that it's good to be aware of the situation and try to sample and get the otoliths when you can. The stock assessment biologists may say that the fishery dependent sampling is not worthwhile and we need to rely on the fishery independent sampling. It is important though that the states continue to work to collect fishery dependent samples. **Donaldson** said that this topic will be brought up at the 2011 data collection workgroup conference call. Most state representatives agreed that 2010 collections will be severely impacted by the oil disaster. **G. Bray** believes that the best approach is to try to get as much metadata information during the year and document the reasons of the shortfall of the sampling targets whether its season closures, oil spill, area closures, or changes in fishing behavior.

#### **Update on Commercial Vessel Project**

**D. Donaldson** gave a brief overview of the registration tracking module which includes issues with staffing, states, and other problems. A contractor was hired to help facilitate, compile, and identify the issues.

**D. McCarron**, IA-Team stated that the primary work product will likely be recommendations to each of the state partners as to how to help FIN and improving the vessel frame. IA-Team is hoping to take an existing model that was developed through ACCSP and share it with FIN, populate it, and make the best use of it; however, the entire model is based on a unique ID number (Hull Identification Number). Regrettably, only two of the five states are collecting HIN and they don't use it to link licenses with vessel owner and characteristics. There is really no effective way to do this but to use the state licensing number or coast guard number. Some issues have occurred with separation between the marine fisheries licensing and DMV's vessel registration and owner registration. Some data requests from DMV's contain duplicates and other discrepancies in the records that make it challenging to work into the model.

#### **Update on MRIP Gulf Logbook Pilot Project**

**D. Donaldson** gave an overview of the project and provided the project plan to the FIN Committee members. The logbook testing for the for-hire fishery focuses on federally permitted vessels since there is a mandatory reporting statute. The focus is 50 federally permitted vessels in the Corpus Christi area and about 300 vessels in the panhandle of Florida. Part of the proposal was developing an electronic reporting tool which included sending out an RFP, receiving responses to the RFP, and evaluating those proposals and making decisions on which contractor to use. Outreach meetings will be arranged in Corpus Christi and in the Florida Panhandle in mid July. These meetings will allow discussions with captains to obtain feedback on the project. The data collection is scheduled to start August 1, 2010. The electronic reporting is the preferred option however a paper logbook will also be provided. The efficiency of mandatory reporting

will be tested to see what kind of response is given and how much work is needed to get 100% compliance. Data collection will continue for a year, through July 2011.

### **Review and Approval of 2009 FIN Annual Report**

FIN Committee members were provided with copies of the draft 2009 FIN Annual Report. It was noted that result oriented tables have been updated to the Annual Report with 2009 information. **D. Donaldson** requested that members of the Committee review the Annual Report and provide comments, revisions, or corrections to staff by June 30, 2010. **D. Donaldson moved to accept the FIN 2009 Annual Report with pending changes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

### **Impacts of Recent Oil Spill in Northern Gulf of Mexico**

**D. Donaldson** asked the States to discuss what they are currently doing in response to the oil spill. **P. Campbell** reported that no oil was currently impacting Texas waters. **Campbell** mentioned a new committee was formed in Austin that would formulate a plan of attack if oil was pushed into Texas waters.

**M. Kasprzak** reported that LDWF's website provided information concerning the opening and closing of state waters. Eastern parts of Louisiana waters were closed at the time of the meeting. Commercial shrimping season was opened early to provide shrimpers a short season to land and sell shrimp. Biologists were out on the water daily checking for oil in addition to doing their routine samples. The field staff for Louisiana completed the HAZWOPER training. The Fishery team was trying to maintain regular sampling including MRFSS, visiting sites, calling captains, documenting cancelled trips, and documenting use of boats for cleanup. **Kasprzak** reported that there were LDWF biologists at the command center in Houma, LA at all times.

**K. Cuevas** reported the waters from the middle of Horn Island to the Alabama state line were currently closed to fishing. MSDEQ, with the assistance of MSDMR are taking water and fish tissue samples from the around the barrier islands. MSDMR fishery staff has completed HAZWOPER training. **C. Murrell** noted that shrimp season opened early on June 3, 2010. The legal count of 68 shrimp per lb was not reached but MSDMR still wanted to allow shrimpers fairly decent catches before oil possibly reached inshore areas. Many of the Mississippi fishing boats were working for BP. The MSDMR enforcement division was patrolling closed areas for fishing and/or shrimping. Oil was found on Petit Bois Island and was cleaned up.

**C. Denson** reported oil had washed up on the beaches of Baldwin County and was found on all Gulf Alabama beaches. All Alabama state waters were closed to fishing including the mouth of the Mobile Bay. All Federal waters bordering Alabama state waters were also closed. Oil was spotted in the Mississippi Sound at the lower end of the Perdido system. **Denson** noted one of the largest problems was following NOAA protocols because they were time consuming, costly, and private labs were unequipped. The FDA had been occupied running baselines with tissue samples. The reopening processes are very lengthy and FDA guidelines called for a sensory analysis followed by a chemical analysis. **Denson** noted that his small staff had been very busy. There have been frequent large fish kills. The wildlife stations handled the deceased birds and those coated in oil and the US Fish and Wildlife Service worked with the turtles and marine mammals. The "Vessel of Opportunity" program produced major problems with out-of-state contractors not employing Alabama fisherman. Bob Riley, the governor of Alabama, got involved and has talked with BP concerning these issues.

**R. Cody** reported there were no Florida state waters closed at that time and Federal waters were closed to the south of Choctawhatchee Bay, east of Destin. The lead agencies are The Department of Environmental Protection and The Department of Emergency Management Services. A central command location was set up with US Coast Guard, US Fish & Wildlife, and state agencies present. Several personnel completed the HAZWOPER training and chain of command sampling training mostly being conducted by fishery independent samplers. Sampling fish kill data continued as usual but sampling seafood dealers and dockside had been put on hold. **Cody** noted a large increase in requests for the number of landings. Initially, these requests for landings had to be delivered by mail or by hand though faxing was permissible with a notary stamp included.

### **Presentation of Commercial IFQ System for Grouper/Tilefish**

**Janet Miller** presented about the Grouper/Tilefish IFQ (Individual Fishing Quota) program. She discussed what an IFQ program is and the importance of the program. Currently, there are 1,100 IFQ shareholder accounts and 112 IFQ dealer accounts. The total allocation is split among species categories distributed amongst individual shareholders. Shares can be allocated to multiple vessel accounts and can be transferred to different shareholders. Fishermen are required to report their landings through an online system. Fishermen are required to provide a 3-12 hour advanced landing notification at an approved landing site. Dealers are required to report pounds landed, price per pound, dealer name, and vessel account.

### **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.

#### **Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee – (Attachment A)**

The Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee/TCC Data Management Subcommittee (DMS) met in October of 2009 and March 2010. At the October 2009 meeting biological sampling activities were discussed including the review of otolith and lengths collected for the thirteen FIN target species for 2009, analysis activities, otolith analysis from 2005 to 2008, and the status of web-based data entry program. Other topics of discussion included the status of commercial vessel information project, the logbook/trip ticket reconciliation process, trip ticket/IFQ compatibility reconciliation, an update on MRIP Gulf of Mexico for-hire logbook project, the review and approval of at-sea sampling protocols, the FIN process to access to confidential data, status of metadata data entry, and an update on data confidentiality M.O.A. The election of officers took place with Kerwin Cuevas elected as chairman and Chris Denson as vice chairman. The review of 2007-2008 commercial data took place in the afternoon. There were no action items to bring to the FIN committee. **M. Kasprzak moved to accept these reports. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

#### **Commercial Port Sampler Meetings – (Attachment B)**

The Gulf Port Samplers met in September 2009 in Panama City, FL. The meeting included several presentations. All port samplers that attended went to the Panama City lab to attend a fish reproductive workshop. **G. Bray** reported that there were no action items to bring to the FIN committee. **M. Kasprzak moved to accept the Commercial Port Sampler reports. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

#### Otolith Processors Training Workshop – (Attachment C)

The Otolith Processors Training Workshop was held in May of 2010 in St. Petersburg, Florida. A presentation was given by **C. Fioramonti** on triggerfish processing and ageing techniques which established some guidelines to the samplers in their efforts. More work is being done on gray triggerfish ageing. There were discussions about the various reference sets. Reading exercises were conducted for black drum, red drum, spotted seatrout, gray triggerfish, king mackerel, flounders, sheepshead, striped mullet, gray snapper, red snapper, and vermillion snapper. Some States have concerns with long term storage of their samples, otolith slides. GSMFC is in the process of developing a surge strategy for these samples housed in Ocean Springs, MS. They are working on coming up with a system for cataloging the samples and storing them. It is hopeful that by the fall 2010 there will be a test design to run by each of the states and get their feedback.

At the end of the workshop there was a review and comparison of the reading exercises done by the groups. The meeting summary of the otolith processors training workshop is attached. There were no action items to bring to the FIN Committee. **P. Campbell moved to accept this report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

#### Commercial and Recreational Technical Work Groups – (Attachment D)

**G. Bray** explained that two work groups met via conference call with the purpose of reviewing and updating the FIN QA/QC (Quality Assurance/Quality Control) documentation. The recreational document was fairly detailed whereas the commercial document was lacking many details currently utilized by the Gulf States. Some input was provided by Louisiana, Florida, and Texas with regards to their commercial QA/QC procedures and were incorporated into the commercial document. Some detail was removed from the recreational document because of too much focus on procedures. A section was added on biological sampling as well as plans to add a section on at-sea sampling. **Bray** noted that once these sections were added, the workgroups further reviewed the document. **D. Donaldson** commented that it is one of the objectives of the committee to review the QA/QC document to ensure that details are incorporated. **D. Donaldson moved to accept this report (Acceptance of this report denotes approval of the QA/QC document.) The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

#### Data Collection Plan Work Group – (Attachment E)

The Data Collection Plan Work Group met via conference call in May 2010. The purpose of this meeting was to review otolith collection reports for 2009 for the FIN priority species. There was useful input from all of the States as to reasons for shortfalls for specific species and modes of sampling. **The work group recommended to the FIN committee that FIN continue to use the current targets for biological sampling in 2011. This recommendation was accepted by the Fin Committee. P. Campbell moved to accept this report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

#### Operations Plan

Status of 2010 Activities - (Attachment F) 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 2011 Operations Plan - The FIN Committee reviewed the 2011 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 2010 to give final approval to the Plan. FIN Committee members were asked to forward any comments or corrections to staff by June 30, 2010. **V. Swann moved to give tentative approval to the 2011 Operations Plan. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

### Discussion of 2011 FIN Priorities

Committee members were provided with a list of items for funding consideration in 2011. **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 2010. 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 12, 2010. The Committee agreed to list as high priority on all ongoing activities. The prioritized list of activities for 2011 is as follows:

#### *Ongoing*

- H - Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities
- H- Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data
- H - Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida
- H - Operation of FIN Data Management System
- H - Trip Ticket Program Operations for Oysters and Finfish in Mississippi
- H - Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama
- H - Trip Ticket Program Operations in Louisiana
- H - Trip Ticket Program Operations in Texas
- H - Biological Sampling of Commercial and Recreational Catches

#### *Reinstating*

- H – Administer Marine Recreational Fishery Survey in Puerto Rico
- L - Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling
- L – Detailed Effort Sampling of Shrimp Fishery in Louisiana

#### *New*

- H – At-sea Sampling for Catch and Discards Data from Large-capacity For-Hire Boats in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida
- H – Part-time staff to assist in entry and maintenance of metadata
- H – Trip Ticket Program Implementation for all Commercial Fisheries in Mississippi



- L – Highly Migratory Species Sampling in the Gulf of Mexico
- L – Biological Sampling for FIN Secondary Priority Species

**Time Schedule and Location for Next Meeting**

The Committee agreed to schedule the next FIN meeting for one of the first two weeks in June 2011. Possible location for the next FIN Meeting is La Parguera, Puerto Rico.

**Other Business**

**D. Donaldson** distributed the history of chairmanship and committee listings to the group and asked members to review them and provide any comments or changes.

*There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*

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

**MINUTES – 60<sup>th</sup> 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 "valid table" 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.*



**TCC DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES (GULF OF MEXICO GEOGRAPHIC SUBCOMMITTEE)**  
**Monday, March 8, 2010**  
**Perdido Beach, AL**

**Chairman Kerwin Cuevas** called the meeting to order at 8:30 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 Brown, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Michelle Kasprzak, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Michael Harden, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
John Froeschke, GMFMC, Tampa, FL  
Steve Turner (proxy for Guy Davenport), NMFS, Miami, FL

**Staff**

David Donaldson, GSMFC Assistant Director, 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  
Janet Lumpkin, GSMFC, FIN Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Joe Ferrer, GSMFC, ITS Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Joe Shepard, LADWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Randy Pausina, LADWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Nicole Shaffer, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Joe Gill, Ocean Springs, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was approved and adopted as written.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the Data Management Subcommittee meeting held on October 12, 2009 in Biloxi, MS were approved as written.

### Status of Biological Sampling Activities

Review of collection and analysis activities – **G. Bray** intended to discuss the otolith collection numbers for 2009 but problems with FIN Discoverer software prevented any results compilation. Bray stated that once these problems are fixed the results from 2009 otolith collection efforts will be emailed to the states and he will contact them individually for feedback. **Bray** also reported that 2008 age data have been delivered and loaded into the FIN Data Management System (DMS).

Status of web-based data entry program – **D. Bellais** reported each state has entered completed data entry for 2009 sample data. Alabama has already started entering 2009 age data along with 2010 sample data. If state data entry personnel have questions as they start entering age data questions should be forwarded to **Bellais**.

### Status of Commercial Vessel Information Project

**D. Donaldson** reported that FIN has been working to collect commercial fishing vessel data for a long time. To help facilitate this process a contractor was hired to collect and compile this information from each state. The contractor has contacted all of the Gulf States. Texas and Mississippi are nearly completed. Florida has provided the majority of their commercial vessel data. Louisiana is working to pull their data and provide it to the contractors in the near future. Alabama is planning to send data to the contractors in 1-2 weeks. **Donaldson** stated he hopes to have the final report prior to the next FIN meeting in June 2010.

### Presentation of Gulf Fisheries One-Stop Shop (GFOSS) Project

**D. Bellais** reported GSMFC has agreed to house the regional one-stop shop for the Gulf of Mexico. GSMFC has the necessary hardware and the contractors are preparing to send the software for testing purposes. The initial task will be using the yearly summary non-confidential data for reporting purposes. Confidential data might be added to the system at a later date. **C. Denson** asked what data elements will be utilized for this task. **Bellais** stated the initial step is providing landings data by year, by species, and possibly by gear. **Donaldson** stated this is a national reporting system under Fisheries Information System (FIS). The goal is to have a national database for reporting purposes and the plan is to utilize the regional FIN programs to provide the required data.

### Updates on Gulf of Mexico For-Hire Logbook Projects

#### MRIP

**D. Donaldson** reported MRIP has developed a proposal to implement a pilot logbook program for the for-hire fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. The proposal focuses on the Corpus Christi area of Texas and the panhandle of Florida. The proposal currently is asking for \$400,000 for approximately 300 vessels in the pilot study. The costs could be significant if and when it is expanded to the entire fleet in the Gulf of Mexico. The proposal has been submitted to MRIP.

The for-hire workgroup is waiting on confirmation that the proposal has been accepted. Donaldson thinks that actual data collection will start sometime in 2010 but possibly later than the start of red snapper season. Several validation methods are going to be tested. An electronic reporting option will be provided along with a paper logbook.

#### LDWF

**M. Kasprzak** reported the voluntary for-hire logbook program is not working well in Louisiana. So far they have received little data. Louisiana is working on submitting some new legislation for consideration that would require mandatory reporting.

#### FFWC

**R. Cody** mentioned Florida attempted a voluntary electronic logbook in Florida using EDRP funds. The program had 1600 qualified possible participants and obtained only 26 actual participants. Money would be provided to participants but voluntary participation was still extremely low.

#### Discussion of Highly Migratory Species Sampling

**D. Donaldson** provided the executive summary from an MRIP project that attempted to characterize highly migratory species (HMS) anglers in the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. **Donaldson** asked that the subcommittee review this project summary and make recommendations to FIN regarding the next step in HMS sampling in the Gulf of Mexico. **Cody** asked if the recommendations from the HMS pilot surveys done in Florida would help in the decision making process for FIN making recommendations about future HMS data collection. **Donaldson** stated having the final report from the Florida pilot surveys could be helpful to the FIN committee in making a recommendation on an HMS sampling strategy. **Denson** asked if the primary goal is to improve HMS landings data or collect biological information on the HMS fishery. **Donaldson** stated the primary goal is to improve landings data as the current recreational survey does a poor job sampling the HMS fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. **Anson** asked how MRIP is going to use the results from the pilot programs to address gaps in data collection programs like HMS. **Donaldson** thinks MRIP will provide technical guidance and oversight but allow for implementation at the regional level. **Kasprzak** asked if the HMS workgroup was planning on additional pilot studies because she is concerned that there is a need to implement something permanent to improve HMS data collection in the Gulf of Mexico. **Donaldson** stated the HMS workgroup has completed all of their pilot studies in the Gulf of Mexico and is now waiting for recommendations from FIN as to the next course of action. **Denson** asked if funding would be available for an HMS data collection effort in the Gulf of Mexico. **Donaldson** stated there is funding available but it is not known if the cost of a Gulf of Mexico data collection program could be fully funded by MRIP. **The Data Management Subcommittee recommended that FIN explore developing a specialized survey for HMS sampling in the Gulf of Mexico.** **Cody** suggested that some preliminary results show MRIP data collection with minor changes could provide additional data to bolster HMS species for certain species.

## Discussion of Gulf Council Motion regarding Recreational Data Collection and Monitoring Programs

**D. Donaldson** mentioned that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) passed a motion at their April meeting about recreational data collection activities. The Council provided three alternatives that they wanted to bring to the states attention. The Council has expressed that if any of these alternatives were adopted the GSMFC and states agencies would be highly involved in the process. **Cody** asked how beneficial will landing tags be as the rate of discarded fish continues to increase. **J. Froeschke** stated that alternative 4 is being pursued through the data collection committee and future activity will likely be generated with that task. **Donaldson** suggested a council update at the June FIN meeting will be helpful. **Turner** is concerned that mandating an electronic logbook with alternative 4 could be problematic for data collectors. **Anson** also agreed with Tuner's statement.

## Review and approval of At-sea Sampling Protocols

**D. Donaldson** stated this issue was brought up at the prior DMS meeting but the Subcommittee decided they needed more time to review the document. **Cody** asked if the DMS can endorse the current at-sea sampling protocol document if MRIP is planning on making changes to their sampling protocols. **Donaldson** mentioned that if endorsed by DMS and the subsequently FIN, the document could still be amended and improved as new sampling methods arise. **Kasprzak** mentioned this is an important step to help FIN with planning and budgeting future at-sea sampling projects. **The DMS recommended that the at-sea sampling protocols document be sent to the FIN Committee for approval as an approved sampling protocol.**

## Status of Metadata Data Entry

**D. Bellais** reminded each state to continue entering, reviewing, and publishing their metadata. All states are having trouble allocating staff to time to continue this work. **Donaldson** asked the Subcommittee if it would be beneficial using a part time person housed at GSMFC to assist the states with metadata activities. All states agreed that an additional staff person would greatly assist them in continuing to expand their metadata work. **The DMS recommended that GSMFC via FIN explore the possibility of adding a part-time staff member to directly assist the states with entering, reviewing, and publishing their metadata.**

## Other business

**D. Donaldson** asked the states to get their 2009 commercial data into GSMFC as soon as possible. This group will have another commercial QA/QC session after the DMS meeting in October and everyone will need to have their 2009 data into Donna prior to that meeting.

**Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:50 p.m.**

**Gulf of Mexico Port Sampler Meeting  
Meeting Summary  
September 22 and 23, 2009  
Panama City, Florida**

Gregg Bray of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission called the Port Sampler meeting to order on May 2, 2007 at 9:00 a.m.

The group listened to several presentations at this meeting. Beverly Barnett presented some findings on research using otolith chemistry to address recruitment and population connectivity questions. Lori Hale gave a presentation about the shark bottom longline observer program and a shark identification presentation. Phil Steele and Susan Gerhart provided an update on the current red snapper IFQ program. David Gloeckner and Gregg Bray discussed TIP and FIN biosampling targets. They both went into a little detail about how they are generated, areas of potential biases with data collection and some future activities that both programs might be involved in. The group received a brief presentation from each state on their respective commercial trip ticket programs. There was a group discussion dealing with species identification differences between port agents and commercial dealers. The group agreed that port agents need to continue to work with dealers on fish identification. The group discussed possible locations for next year's meeting and decided they would target Galveston, TX. Everyone agreed the middle to end of September worked best for this meeting.

On the second day 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 weight 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.

FIN Otolith Processors Training Workshop

Meeting Summary

May 4-5, 2010

St. Petersburg, Florida

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. and the following people were present:

Alison Amick, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Jessica Carroll, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Janet Tunnell, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
David Westmark, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Jaime Miller, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL  
Emily Seale, AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL  
Debbie Belk, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Brittany Breazeale, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Wes Devers, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Isis Longo, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Prince Robinson, 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  
Chris Palmer, NMFS, Panama City, FL  
David Berrane, NMFS, Beaufort, NC  
Tracy McCulloch, NMFS, Beaufort, NC  
Gary Gray, GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Andy Fischer, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA  
Gregg Bray, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Presentation of Gray Triggerfish Processing and Ageing Techniques

**C. Fioramonti** reported that a small group of people met early this year to work on the development of a practical ageing technique for the first dorsal spines of gray triggerfish that would decrease ageing precision error within and between readers of this species. Gray triggerfish ages have not been validated, so the priority at this point is to increase precision between readers. She presented several slides and demonstrated when to count (or not count) a ring and showed how to determine the margin code. There was significant discussion including the identification of the first annulus due to distance from the core and its contrast to the adjacent translucent zones, determination of increment/spacing between translucent zones is difficult as it appears to be inconsistent as well as others.

The preliminary protocols consisted of 1) count any mark that is conspicuous; 2) first annulus is a mark with a distinct translucent zone, encircling the focus; 3) annuli can be considered doublets if they are very close together with no other “noise” or checks between; 4) pay attention to increment spacing but remember this is somatic growth as opposed to metabolic growth; and 5) think about how your neighbor will age it—this is about precision. The group agreed that this species is very difficult to age and further work and training is necessary before consensus can be reached.

#### Discussion of Margin Codes for Gray Triggerfish

The group then discussed the appropriate codes for identifying the margins of triggerfish spines. It was noted that with this species, the margin code is essentially a measure of presence or absence and it was suggested that a simple system of O (opaque) and T (translucent) be used to identify the margin codes. However, **S. VanderKooy** noted that creating another set of codes when there is already a set of codes that was developed by consensus from all of the state and federal partners in the Gulf of Mexico does not seem very logical. Since it is just a matter of presence or absences, it would make sense to use the existing FIN codes to denote that situation. **After some discussion, the group agreed to use the following codes for gray triggerfish:**

**1 – Presence of ring on the edge**

**2 – Absence of ring on the edge**

There was some concern that the meaning of these codes for triggerfish might get mixed up with other species but it was pointed out that as long as it is identified as triggerfish, the meaning of the codes will be clear.

#### Presentation of Vermilion Snapper Ageing Issues

**R. Allman** presented several slides regarding vermilion snapper. It appears that the majority of vermilion snapper are captured in the early part of the year. They have been studying the distance from the core to the 1<sup>st</sup> ring and it appears to be fairly consistent independent of the age of the fish (~0.55 mm). They would like to get some younger fish to bolster the sample size of the those age classes but it appears that the 1<sup>st</sup> ring appears at 0.55-.6 mm for vermilion snapper.

#### Presentation of Lionfish Ageing Project

**D. Berrane** discussed a project regarding the non-native species, lionfish. There are actually two species of lionfish which have been causing problems in the Caribbean and South Atlantic regions. They consume many species of fishes and a few invertebrates and are also capable of reproducing throughout the year. Their otoliths are relatively small and ovate and often lack postrostrum development in larger fish. The otolith is laterally compressed and has indented sulcus on the proximal surface. He provided an overview of the extraction of the otoliths and showed a short video clip of the process. To process the otolith, they are embedded in epoxy and the core is marked. The otolith is fastened to the slide with crystal bond and sectioned on an Isomet Low Speed Saw at 6.5 speed and cut into 0.3mm sections. The sections are fastened to the finish slide with crystal bond and applied with liquid cover slip. For the best

age determination, annuli are typically most readable on ventral side of otolith.

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 5:00 p.m.**

**May 5, 2010**

**The meeting was reconvened at 9:00 a.m.**

Discussion of Sheepshead Reference Set

**W. Devers** reported that the location of the reference set is currently unknown. He asked that people check in their labs for the set and if located, conduct the reading and pass it on to the next agency. Once all agencies have read the set, an APE will be calculated and distributed to the group. The set will be distributed again to the states and the results of the readings will be presented to the group at the May 2011 meeting. The table shows the historical APEs for this species (the value will be added once the reading of the set has been completed).

**D. Donaldson** noted that it is very important that this reference set (as well as the other sets) gets distributed in a timely manner to ensure all agencies have read the set and the responsible person has enough time to compile the APEs prior to the otolith workshop. These reference sets are used to ensure that the readers from each agency are compatible and comparable and the ageing data can be used for assessments.

	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Sheepshead	3.91	

Discussion of Red Snapper Reference Set

**R. Allman** stated that the reference set has been pared down to 200 slides (as decided at the last meeting). There were some delays in getting the reference set distributed and only Florida has read the set this year. The set is currently in Alabama. Once all agencies have read the set, an APE will be calculated and distributed to the group. The set will be distributed to the appropriate agencies and the results of the readings will be presented to the group at the May 2011 meeting. The table shows the historical APEs for this species (the value will be added once the reading of the set has been completed).

	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Red snapper	2.74	4.90	4.34		



### Discussion of Flounder Reference Set

**A. Fischer** distributed documentation regarding the set. It was noted that the APE increased from 3.22% to 8.32% for all agencies. The APEs for individual agencies vs. the average age as well as vs. Louisiana were all under the 5% standard with the exception of Texas. It appears there are still some issues regarding assigning the margin codes. In addition, some of the older slides have become difficult to read and will be replaced prior to distribution for the 2011 reading exercise. The set will be distributed to the appropriate agencies and the results of the readings will be presented to the group at the May 2011 meeting. The table shows the historical APEs for this species.

	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Southern flounder	6.71	18.89*	7.35	3.22	8.32

\*data transcription errors resulted in elevated APE)

### Discussion of King Mackerel Reference Set

**C. Palmer** stated that Florida, Mississippi and Louisiana have read the reference set while Texas and Alabama still need to read it. While the set has not been read by all agencies, there is some encouraging news that it appears there has been improvement over time with the APEs (i.e. for Louisiana, 2007 – 7.75% APE vs. 2010 – 3.90% APE). Once all agencies have read the set, an APE will be calculated and distributed to the group. 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 2011 meeting. The table shows the historical APEs for this species (the values will be added once the reading of the set has been completed).

	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
King mackerel (overall)	5.83	7.45	
King mackerel (sectioned)	3.39	4.87	
King mackerel (whole)	9.13	10.04	

### Discussion of Red drum/Spotted Seatrout/Striped Mullet Reference Sets

**J. Tunnell** stated that the sets are still being read by the various agencies and once all agencies have read the set, an APE will be calculated and distributed to the group. The sets will again be distributed and the results of the readings will be presented to the group at the May 2011 meeting. The table shows the historical APEs for this species (the values will be added once the reading of the set has been completed).

	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Red drum	2.36	
Spotted seatrout	3.15	
Striped mullet	7.12	

### Discussion of Vermilion Snapper Reference Set

**R. Allman** reported that there are 200 otoliths in the reference set. Currently the set is being read by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resource. Staff from Florida and Alabama have read the set and their APEs are 3.75% and 5.91% respectively. There were some delays in distributing the set due to training issues but once all agencies have read the set, an APE will be calculated and distributed to the group. It was also noted that digital images for some of the otoliths are being developed and will be distributed to the group. The set will again be

distributed and the results of the readings will be presented to the group at the May 2011 meeting. The table shows the historical APEs for this species (the value will be added once the reading of the set has been completed).

	2010
Vermilion snapper	

#### Discussion of Black Drum Reference Set

**S. VanderKooy** stated that all agencies have read the reference set. There were some issues with how to bump the ages. Apparently, the protocols in the manual were not correct and the APE utilizing these protocols was 15.73%. However, after correcting the error and using the right protocols, the APE was reduced to 7.93%. While that is better, it is still higher than the 5% standard. The high APE may be due to some bad slides in the set. **S. VanderKooy** stated that he will be removing and replacing those slides as well as reshooting some of the images in the set and hopefully that will remedy the problems and next year the APE will be lower. He will distribute the reference set to the various agencies prior to the 2011 workshop in order to establish an APE for discussion at the meeting. The table shows the historical APEs for this species.

	2010
Black drum	7.93

#### Discussion of Gray Triggerfish Reference Set

**C. Fioramonti** reported that she currently has a set of 30 slides. She has samples from Alabama and Florida and asked that Louisiana and Texas to provide her with 20 spines that have been processed for inclusion in the set. In conjunction with Louisiana, APEs between 8.5% to 9.5% were obtained during an informal training session. It was suggested that a processing description paper be developed to better characterize the steps that are necessary to effectively process the spines and **C. Fioramonti** states she would develop something and distribute to the various agencies. She is hoping to have a reference set available at the May 2011 meeting.

#### Discussion of Storage of Otoliths

**D. Donaldson** stated that an issue has arisen in Alabama regarding storage for otoliths and thought it would be good topic to discuss with the group. Alabama is running out of space to store the processed and whole otoliths collected under FIN. It was noted that while it is currently an issue only in Alabama, it has the potential to become a problem for all agencies. As a short-term fix, **D. Donaldson suggested that Alabama send their excess otoliths to the Commission office and they will store them at their unit.** **D. Donaldson** indicated that the boxes need to be clearly marked regarding the materials that are in them in order to accurately keep track of them. As a longer-term solution, **it was decided that the GSMFC will develop a storage and tracking system and present this system to the group at the next otolith meeting for discussion.** **B. Barnett** stated that NMFS-Panama City had developed a similar system and would be willing to provide this system as a starting point.

#### 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 first part of May 2011. **D. Donaldson** stated that he would develop a draft agenda prior to the meeting and distribute it to everyone for comment.

Other Business

D. Donaldson mentioned that it might expedite the reading of reference sets if each set did not have to be read every year. The determining factor for reading a set would be if the APEs were routinely under the 5% standard. **The group believed this was a good idea and would begin implementing this policy as appropriate.**

The group then discussed the reading of greater amberjack otoliths. Unfortunately, Deb Murie was unable to attend this meeting due to ongoing project so the group was not able to get further clarification about otolith analysis. However, greater amberjack is scheduled for an assessment in 2011 and there is a critical need to analyze the otoliths for use in this assessment. It was suggested that it would be useful to have a training session later this year, if possible. **D. Donaldson** stated that funds might be available for such a session. It was suggested that the session could be conducted via the web to save on travel costs. After some discussion, **it was determined that Louisiana collects the majority of greater amberjack otoliths in the Gulf of Mexico so the Commission would set up some type of web-based training session with LDWF, NOAA and Deb Murie to discuss the analysis of greater amberjack otoliths for later this year.**

**S. VanderKooy** noted that he and R. Allman are conducting a study regarding large, older black drum and there is a need to otoliths from this type of fish. So, he requested that if states have otoliths (either processed or whole) from older (at least 15 years old) black drum, please send them to him for use in the study. Also, he noted that the spreadsheet does not accurately calculate APEs if there are zero-aged fish in the set. To remedy this problem, readers can manually enter 0 in the age column and it will correctly calculate APE.

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 (please note that APEs are recorded as a percentage).

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Black drum					0.67	0.21	2.67	0.00
Red drum					0.52	4.35	1.63	2.83
Spotted seatrout					0.00	4.55	1.17	1.44
Southern flounder		10.54	9.51	4.00	2.86	8.78	3.03	6.48
Striped mullet					6.97	7.48	9.84	2.87
Sheepshead					0.42	8.72	2.96	4.12
Red snapper	16.01	4.97	5.58	3.32	1.14	6.04	3.55	1.30
Gray snapper					3.19	9.22	1.80	3.41
Vermilion snapper					6.10	16.32	8.54	7.02
King mackerel			13.60	2.88	11.51	6.48	13.12	10.26
Gray triggerfish					16.81	21.79	16.02	10.18

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. It was noted that the problems with southern flounder were probably due to the margin code issues identified during the reference set discussion. There are still some issues with 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. The majority of the time for this topic was spent discussing triggerfish. There is still confusion on what are actually rings and the group agreed there is still a need for additional training.

It was suggested that it might be useful to have copies of the otolith images for each group so they could indicate what they counted as rings during the reading exercise. Then during the comparison exercise, they could use these copies to determine how the group counted the rings for a particular otolith. **The group agreed that this would be a useful tool and would provide this resource for the next meeting.** J. Tunnell indicated that she had images for all the species with the exception of gray triggerfish and king mackerel. So, C. Fioramonti and C. Palmer will provide Florida staff with images prior to the next meeting.

**Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.**

**Commercial and Recreational Technical Work Group  
Conference Call Summary**

**April 15th, 9 a.m.**

The following workgroup members were present:

Steve Brown, FFWRI, Saint Petersburg, FL  
Chris Denson, ALDCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Michelle Kasprzak, LADWFP, Baton Rouge, LA  
Beverly Sauls, FFWRI, Saint Petersburg, FL  
Kerwin Cuevas, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Rob Andrews, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD  
Ken Brennan, NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC  
Craig Lilyestrom, PRDNER, Rio Piedras, PR

**Staff**

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

**Review and update FIN QA/QC documentation**

**G. Bray** discussed the purpose of the call was to review and update the FIN QA/QC documentation. **Bray** mentioned the recreational document was fairly detailed but the commercial document was lacking many of the details currently employed by the Gulf States. Donaldson asked if Florida and Louisiana could provide the details of their commercial QA/QC processes. Kasprzak and Brown both agreed to provide their commercial QA/QC documentation to help bolster the FIN documentation. Bray is also going to discuss this with P. Campbell from TPWD to make sure Texas is not doing anything different that would need to be included in this document. Bray mentioned a large section of the recreational documentation could be removed since it pertains to specific sampling guidelines that are already covered in sampling protocol manuals provided to the samplers. All of the work group members agreed that those details do not necessarily pertain to this QA/QC document. Donaldson also stated we will add a section pertaining to head boat at-sea observer and biological sampling QA/QC protocols. Once completed GSMFC will send the document out to the workgroup for a final review. Any final suggestions or comments will be processed into the document.

**There being no further business, the call was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.**

**FIN Data Collection Plan Work Group**

**Conference Call Summary**

**May 13th, 9 a.m.**

The following workgroup members were present:

Harry Blanchet, LADWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Britt Bumguardner, TPWD, Palacios, TX  
John Mareska, ALDCNR, Dauphin Island, AL

**Staff**

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

**Others**

Gary Fitzhugh, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL  
Chris Palmer, NOAA Fisheries, Panama City, FL  
D. Gloeckner (proxy for Guy Davenport), NOAA Fisheries, Beaufort, NC  
Richard Cody, FMRI, Saint Petersburg, FL

**Review of 2009 Otolith Collection Reports**

**G. Bray** described the results presented in the spreadsheet comparing otoliths collected and total landings for 2009 for the FIN priority species. **Bray** mentioned that each state seemed to be doing a decent job of reaching targets. Some major shortfalls were observed for greater amberjack, gray triggerfish, and sheepshead. Many of the states stated these species are not observed regularly by biological samplers. These species are potentially being harvested by trips outside of normal biological sampling times and on multiday recreational trips that are not regularly sampled. Also the fact that some of these are secondary species that are not often targeted makes them difficult to find with any regularity. **D. Donaldson** stated that many of these shortfalls likely occur from relying on fishery dependant data as the source of harvested fish. **G. Fitzhugh** asked if recent changes in fishing regulations are a big reason for some of the shortfalls. **H. Blanchet** stated that the change in how targets are calculated combined with shorter seasons for some of the high priority species has a big effect on reaching biological sampling targets. **J. Mareska** stated 2010 collections will likely be further impacted by the current oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. A reduction in overall fishing effort due to concerns of public safety and fish health will make it even more difficult to collect samples from recreational fisherman and commercial fish houses. **Bray** asked if the targets for some of the secondary species that we continually miss are having a negative impact on sampling due to the time spent looking for samples from these species. **R. Cody** stated Florida is adjusting their sampling goals during the season based on available species. The group agreed that changing the targets would not be necessary at this time. **Bray** also provided a draft version of the 2009 age-structure samples collected by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Panama City Laboratory. **C. Palmer** stated that the total number of samples has increased from approximately 44,000 to 47,000 now with most of the increases being red grouper, red snapper, vermilion snapper, gag,

and gray triggerfish from Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI). **Palmer** stated that samples are still coming in and they are cataloging them as they receive them. **G. Fitzhugh** asked if the perceived decrease in the number of length measurements collected is an accurate assessment. **Cody** stated in Florida there is likely a decrease for commercial samples due to the time required to collect the hard part. **Blanchet** stated Louisiana samplers are instructed to put their focus on collecting the hard part if there is a constraint on collecting both measurements and hard parts. **Mareska** stated that TIP would likely need an increase in funding to allow samplers to increase the total number of length measurements. **After further discussion the group agreed to recommend to the FIN Committee that FIN continue to use the current targets for biological sampling in 2011. The group wanted to acknowledge that impacts due to current fishery management regimes and the impact of the oil spill need to be offset with increased levels of sampling to maintain the current level of data collection.**

**There being no further business, the call adjourned at 9:47 a.m.**

## STATUS OF 2010 ACTIVITIES

### A. Data Collection and Management Activities

- Task A1:**            Development and Implementation of Trip Ticket Program (Goal 2, Objective 2) (C)  
**Objective:**        Develop and implement a trip ticket program for the Southeast Region.  
**Status:**            The state of Mississippi continues the implementation of trip ticket programs in their state. This task provides for development 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 FIN. Mississippi is currently collecting trip-level data for oyster, bait shrimp and finfish landings. They are attempting to pass legislation that would allow for the expansion of collection of trip-level data for all commercial species. For Texas, Louisiana and Alabama, funding is provided for the majority of operation of their trip ticket programs. In addition, GSMFC contracts with Bluefin Data to implement and maintain electronic trip ticket reporting for Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Ultimately, all states will have operating trip tickets program and all commercial landings will be captured via these systems
- Task A2:**            Collection of Recreational Fisheries Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)  
**Objective:**        Collection of recreational fisheries data in the Gulf of Mexico.  
**Status:**            Activities are operating normally. The states are collecting the necessary data and meeting or exceeding quota on a routine basis. The GSMFC continues to administer and coordinate these activities.
- Task A3:**            Continue the Support of Menhaden Data Collection Activities (Goal 2, Objective 5) (C)  
**Objective:**        Continue the support of menhaden sampling in the Gulf of Mexico.  
**Status:**            Due to funding cuts later in the year, this task was removed from the 2010 FIN funding document.
- Task:**                Continue the Collection of Head Boat Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)  
**Objective:**        Continue the support of head boat sampling in the Gulf of Mexico.  
**Status:**            Head boat samplers were hired to sample catches, collect catch reports from head boat personnel, and gather effort data on head boats which operate primarily in the Exclusive Economic Zone from ports along the coasts of Texas and Florida. This activity is operating normally. This task began in January 2000.
- Task A4:**            Collection of Biological (otoliths and lengths) Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)  
**Objective:**        Implement the collection of recreational and commercial sampling of biological data in the Gulf of Mexico.  
**Status:**            Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida have hired personnel to conduct biological sampling interviews of recreational and commercial fishermen using the modified MRFSS and Trip Interview Program protocols. Samplers collect length frequencies, identifications of species, trip and gear characteristics, hard parts (otoliths) and make comparisons of interview data to trip ticket data for quality assurance purposes. Samplers are focusing on black drum, gag, gray snapper, gray triggerfish, greater amberjack, king mackerel, red drum, red grouper, red snapper, sheepshead, flounders (gulf & southern), spotted seatrout, striped mullet and vermilion snapper. The states are also analyzing the otoliths to determine number of rings and edge codes. These data have been utilized in the recent assessments of king mackerel and red snapper. This task began in January 2002.
- Task A5:**            Design, Implementation and Maintenance of Data Management System (Goal 3, Objective 3) (F)  
**Objective:**        To design, implement, and maintain a marine commercial and recreational fisheries data



management system to accommodate fishery management/research and other needs (e.g., trade and tourism).

Status: The FIN will continue to develop and maintain the Data Management System (DMS). The FIN Data Base Manager as well as the ComFIN Survey Coordinator continues to routinely load the necessary data into the system.

Task A6: Standards/Protocols/Documentation for Data Management (Goal 3, Objective 4) (F)

Objective: Develop standard protocols and documentation for data formats, input, editing, quality control, storage, access, transfer, dissemination, and application.

Status: Standard protocols and documentation for data formats, input, editing, quality control, storage, access, transfer, dissemination, and application are being developed for the system.

**B. Committee Activities**

Task B1: Annual Operations Plan, 2011 (Goal 1, Objective 3) (F)

Objective: Develop 2011 Annual Operations Plan including identification of available resources that implements the Framework Plan.

Status: This document was drafted and will be addressed by the Committee at the June 2010 meeting.

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

Objective: Support the establishment of long-term, comprehensive MRF surveys in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Status: Due to hiring and state budgetary constraints, Puerto Rico was unable to adequately staff the recreational activities and the task of administrating this activity went back to the NMFS contractor. However, the hiring and budgetary constraints have been resolved and the GSMFC, in conjunction with Puerto Rico is exploring the possibility of taking over the administration and coordination of the MRFSS in Puerto Rico for next year. In addition, U.S. Virgin Islands, NMFS and GSMFC personnel have discussed the possibility of providing similar support of the MRFSS in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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

Objective: Distribute program information to cooperators and interested parties.

Status: The results-oriented tables have been incorporated in the FIN Annual Report. This task is an ongoing activity.

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

Objective: Further development and implementation an outreach program for FIN

Status: The FIN Committee approved the outreach strategy in June 2002. The Outreach Work Group developed an electronic reporting option for trip tickets document as well as availability of data via the FIN DMS document. The FIN DMS material has been distributed to the appropriate people/agencies however, due to delays because of storms and other issues, the electronic reporting option document has not been sent out. It should go out later this year.

Task B5: Implementation of the Social/Economic Module (Goal 2, Objective 2) (F)

Objective: Develop the social/economic module for the ComFIN.

Status: The Social/Economic Work Group has designed a data collection module for the compilation of social/economic information for all commercial fisheries in the Southeast Region. The GSMFC in conjunction with NMFS has hired a term economist to work on various economic projects. The economist will be presenting some preliminary results from the inshore shrimp project to the FIN Committee at the June 2010 meeting. FIN also needs to determine if there are any social and economic projects that need to be addressed in the future.

Task B6: Development of Metadata Database (Goal 2, Objective 2) (F)

Objective: Compile metadata for inclusion into a metadata database for the Southeast Region.

Status: The InPort metadata entry tool has been implemented in the Gulf of Mexico which provides documentation of fisheries-dependent statistics data collection programs in the Gulf. Program partners are responsible for updating and maintaining this information. This is a standing agenda item at the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee meeting. Also, it was recommended that the Commission explore the possibility of hiring a part-time staff member to assist the states in entering and maintaining this information. This issue will be discussed at the June 2010 meeting.

Task B7: Implementation of Registration Tracking System (Goal 2, Objective 2) (C)

Objective: Development of a registration tracking system for FIN.

Status: The Committee approved a registration tracking system in June 2002. The next step is for program partners to modify their existing licensing systems to collect all the needed elements. The Commission has contracted with IA-Team to assist the states in compiling the vessel information and the project is nearing completion. This is also a standing agenda item at the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee meeting.

Task B8: Evaluation of QA/QC Standards (Goal 2, Objective 3) (F)

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

Status: The Commercial and Recreational Technical Work Groups met in April and will present their recommendations at the June 2010 meeting.

Task B9: Port Samplers Workshops (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)

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

Status: In an effort to provide a forum for discussing various issues concerning commercial data collection activities, the FIN Committee decided to convene a workshop of state and federal port agents. The Gulf of Mexico samplers met in September 2009. The workshop was attended by state and federal port agents as well as the appropriate NMFS staff and other interested personnel. The recommendations developed from the 2009 meeting will be addressed by the FIN Committee at the June 2010 meeting.

Task B10: Otolith Processors Training Workshop (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)

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

Status: In an effort to provide a forum to ensure quality control and quality assurance for otolith processing, the FIN Committee decided to convene workshops of state and federal processors. Processing personnel from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, GSMFC, NMFS and other interested personnel attended the workshop. The recommendations developed from the 2010 meeting will be addressed by the FIN Committee at the June 2010 meeting.

Task B11: Develop Methods for Validating Recreational Discards Data (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)

Objective: Develop methods for validating the data regarding discarded recreational catch in the Gulf of Mexico.

Status: The Recreational Technical Work Group will work in conjunction with MRIP regarding the recreational redesign activities to address this issue. Several work group members and staff are already involved in the redesign work. Periodical reports from MRIP will be provided to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B12: Identification and Evaluation of Current Programs (Goal 2, Objective 4) (F)

Objective: Identify and evaluate the adequacy of current and future programs for meeting FIN standards.

Status: This task is an ongoing activity.

Task B13:        Combining Duplicative Data Collection and Management Activities (Goal 2, Objective 4) (F)  
Objective:        Identify and combine duplicative data collection and management efforts.  
Status:            This task is an ongoing activity.

Task B14:        Review of Recreational Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)  
Objective:        Periodically review the recreational catch and effort data collected under the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey methods  
Status:            The Gulf States, GSMFC and NOAA Fisheries meet about every 4 months to review the catch and effort data collected under the MRFSS methods. The group will examine the catch data looking for potential species misidentifications, outliers (overly large/small or light/heavy fish, etc.). For the effort data, the group looks at the historical data and compares it with the current wave data to determine if there are large decreases or increases. This is part of the ongoing QA/QC procedures under the recreational data collection program.

Task B15:        Integration into the Stock Assessment Process (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)  
Objective:        Develop a plan that outlines the needs for stock assessment for the upcoming year as well as tracking the collection of these data.  
Status:            The Committee has developed a data collection plan that identifies the priority species (and associated data needed to be collected) for the state, interstate and federal entities as well as establishes sampling target levels for biological data. The Data Collection Plan Work Group met in May and will present their recommendations at the June 2010 meeting.

Task B16:        Determination of Methods for Collecting Recreational Data from Private Access Sites Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)  
Objective:        Determine most appropriate methods for collecting recreational data from private access sites.  
Status:            The FIN Committee has tasked the Recreational Technical Work Group with determining the best method of collected data from private access sites. Since the recreational redesign activities (MRIP) will be addressing this issue, the Work Group decided to become involved (several work group members and staff are already involved in the redesign work) in that initiative instead of reinventing the wheel. Periodical reports from MRIP will be provided to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B17:        Establish/modify recreational licenses (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)  
Objective:        Establish/modify recreational licenses to meet criteria for use as sampling frame  
Status:            The FIN has discussed this issue in the past and the states need to make the necessary modifications to the licenses. A pilot survey began in April 2007 using recreational fishing licenses as a sampling frame and continues in Louisiana. Periodical reports from MRIP will be provided to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B18:        Develop Methodologies for Sampling Highly Migratory Species (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)  
Objective:        Develop methods for accurately collect catch and effort data for highly migratory species (HMS) in the Gulf of Mexico  
Schedule:        The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council asked the FIN to examine the best methods for collecting catch and effort data for HMS species, specifically yellowfin tuna. Since the recreational redesign activities (MRIP) will be addressing this issue, the Work Group decided to become involved (several work group members and staff are already involved in the redesign work) in that initiative instead of reinventing the wheel. In addition, the FIN Committee will be reviewing recommendations from several MRIP reports regarding HMS at the June 2010 meeting and deciding on the appropriate actions.

Task B19:        Recreational Fishing Participation (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)  
Objective:        Explore methods to accurately estimate recreational fishing participation in the Gulf of Mexico  
Approach:        The FIN Committee tasked the Recreational Technical Work Group with exploring methods for

determining recreational fishing participation, by state, in the Gulf. Since the recreational redesign activities (MRIP) will be addressing this issue, the Work Group decided to become involved (several work group members and staff are already involved in the redesign work) in that initiative instead of reinventing the wheel. Periodical reports from MRIP will be provided to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B20: Coordination and Integration of Data Collection Efforts (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)  
Objective: Encourage coordination, integration, and augmentation, as appropriate, of data collection efforts to meet the FIN requirements.  
Status: This task is an ongoing activity.

Task B21: Evaluation of Innovative Data Collection Technologies (Goal 2, Objective 6) (F)  
Objective: To evaluate and recommend innovative data collection technologies  
Status: Issues will be address by the FIN Committee as the need arises. This task is an ongoing activity.

Task B22: Implementation of In-Season Quota Monitoring (Goal 2, Obj 6) (F)  
Objective: To explore strategies for implementing in-season quota monitoring for the recreational fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico  
Status: This issue was identified during the 2005 facilitated session as a topic that FIN needed to reexamine. In the past, FIN has recommended that in-season quota monitoring for recreational fisheries not be implemented; however, it appears the in-season quota monitoring may become a reality so FIN needs to address this subject. The FIN will work in conjunction with MRIP to explore this issue. Periodical reports from MRIP will be provided to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

Task B23: Identification of Databases for DMS Integration (Goal 3, Objective 5) (R)  
Objective: Identify the commercial and recreational databases that should be integrated into the FIN DMS.  
Status: This issue will be addressed by the FIN Committee at the June 2010 meeting.

Task B24: Evaluation of Information Management Technologies (Goal 3, Objective 6) (F)  
Objective: To evaluate and recommend innovative, cost-effective information management technologies.  
Status: This issue will be addressed by the Committee as the need arises. This task is an ongoing activity.

Task B25: Long-term National Program Planning (Goal 4, Objective 1) (F)  
Objective: Provide for long-term national program planning  
Status: The FIN Committee members, GSMFC staff and ACCSP staff continue to attend Pacific RecFIN, PacFIN, ACCSP meetings as well as other pertinent meetings and coordinate activities as appropriate. This task is an ongoing activity.

Task B26: Coordination, Consistency and Comparability with Other Cooperative Marine Commercial and Recreational Fisheries Programs (Goal 4, Objective 2 and Objective 3) (F)  
Objective: Coordinate FIN with other regional cooperative marine commercial and recreational fisheries programs and encourage consistency and comparability among regional programs over time.  
Status: The FIN Committee members, GSMFC staff and ACCSP staff continue to coordinate activities with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission as well as attend the national NMFS FIS meetings. This is an ongoing activity.

**Objective:** Compile metadata for inclusion into a metadata database for the Southeast Region.  
**Status:** The InPort metadata entry tool has been implemented in the Gulf of Mexico which provides documentation of fisheries-dependent statistics data collection programs in the Gulf. Program partners are responsible for updating and maintaining this information. This is a standing agenda item at the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee meeting. Also, it was recommended that the Commission explore the possibility of hiring a part-time staff member to assist the states in entering and maintaining this information. This issue will be discussed at the June 2010 meeting.

**Task B7: Implementation of Registration Tracking System (Goal 2, Objective 2) (C)**

**Objective:** Development of a registration tracking system for FIN.

**Status:** The Committee approved a registration tracking system in June 2002. The next step is for program partners to modify their existing licensing systems to collect all the needed elements. The Commission has contracted with IA-Team to assist the states in compiling the vessel information and the project is nearing completion. This is also a standing agenda item at the Gulf of Mexico Geographic Subcommittee meeting.

**Task B8: Evaluation of QA/QC Standards (Goal 2, Objective 3) (F)**

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

**Status:** The Commercial and Recreational Technical Work Groups met in April and will present their recommendations at the June 2010 meeting.

**Task B9: Port Samplers Workshops (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)**

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

**Status:** In an effort to provide a forum for discussing various issues concerning commercial data collection activities, the FIN Committee decided to convene a workshop of state and federal port agents. The Gulf of Mexico samplers met in September 2009. The workshop was attended by state and federal port agents as well as the appropriate NMFS staff and other interested personnel. The recommendations developed from the 2009 meeting will be addressed by the FIN Committee at the June 2010 meeting.

**Task B10: Otolith Processors Training Workshop (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)**

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

**Status:** In an effort to provide a forum to ensure quality control and quality assurance for otolith processing, the FIN Committee decided to convene workshops of state and federal processors. Processing personnel from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, GSMFC, NMFS and other interested personnel attended the workshop. The recommendations developed from the 2010 meeting will be addressed by the FIN Committee at the June 2010 meeting.

**Task B11: Develop Methods for Validating Recreational Discards Data (Goal 2, Objective 3) (C)**

**Objective:** Develop methods for validating the data regarding discarded recreational catch in the Gulf of Mexico.

**Status:** The Recreational Technical Work Group will work in conjunction with MRIP regarding the recreational redesign activities to address this issue. Several work group members and staff are already involved in the redesign work. Periodical reports from MRIP will be provided to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.

**Task B12: Identification and Evaluation of Current Programs (Goal 2, Objective 4) (F)**

**Objective:** Identify and evaluate the adequacy of current and future programs for meeting FIN standards.

**Status:** This task is an ongoing activity.

**Task B13: Combining Duplicative Data Collection and Management Activities (Goal 2, Objective 4) (F)**

**Objective:** Identify and combine duplicative data collection and management efforts.

**Status:** This task is an ongoing activity.

- Task B14: Review of Recreational Data (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)  
Objective: Periodically review the recreational catch and effort data collected under the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey methods  
Status: The Gulf States, GSMFC and NOAA Fisheries meet about every 4 months to review the catch and effort data collected under the MRFSS methods. The group will examine the catch data looking for potential species misidentifications, outliers (overly large/small or light/heavy fish, etc.). For the effort data, the group looks at the historical data and compares it with the current wave data to determine if there are large decreases or increases. This is part of the ongoing QA/QC procedures under the recreational data collection program.
- Task B15: Integration into the Stock Assessment Process (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)  
Objective: Develop a plan that outlines the needs for stock assessment for the upcoming year as well as tracking the collection of these data.  
Status: The Committee has developed a data collection plan that identifies the priority species (and associated data needed to be collected) for the state, interstate and federal entities as well as establishes sampling target levels for biological data. The Data Collection Plan Work Group met in May and will present their recommendations at the June 2010 meeting.
- Task B16: Determination of Methods for Collecting Recreational Data from Private Access Sites Goal 2, Objective 5) (R)  
Objective: Determine most appropriate methods for collecting recreational data from private access sites.  
Status: The FIN Committee has tasked the Recreational Technical Work Group with determining the best method of collected data from private access sites. Since the recreational redesign activities (MRIP) will be addressing this issue, the Work Group decided to become involved (several work group members and staff are already involved in the redesign work) in that initiative instead of reinventing the wheel. Periodical reports from MRIP will be provided to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.
- Task B17: Establish/modify recreational licenses (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)  
Objective: Establish/modify recreational licenses to meet criteria for use as sampling frame  
Status: The FIN has discussed this issue in the past and the states need to make the necessary modifications to the licenses. A pilot survey began in April 2007 using recreational fishing licenses as a sampling frame and continues in Louisiana. Periodical reports from MRIP will be provided to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.
- Task B18: Develop Methodologies for Sampling Highly Migratory Species (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)  
Objective: Develop methods for accurately collect catch and effort data for highly migratory species (HMS) in the Gulf of Mexico  
Schedule: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council asked the FIN to examine the best methods for collecting catch and effort data for HMS species, specifically yellowfin tuna. Since the recreational redesign activities (MRIP) will be addressing this issue, the Work Group decided to become involved (several work group members and staff are already involved in the redesign work) in that initiative instead of reinventing the wheel. In addition, the FIN Committee will be reviewing recommendations from several MRIP reports regarding HMS at the June 2010 meeting and deciding on the appropriate actions.
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Approach: The FIN Committee tasked the Recreational Technical Work Group with exploring methods for determining recreational fishing participation, by state, in the Gulf. Since the recreational redesign activities (MRIP) will be addressing this issue, the Work Group decided to become involved (several work group members and staff are already involved in the redesign work) in that initiative instead of reinventing the wheel. Periodical reports from MRIP will be provided to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.
- Task B20: Coordination and Integration of Data Collection Efforts (Goal 2, Objective 5) (F)  
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Status: This task is an ongoing activity.

- Task B21:      Evaluation of Innovative Data Collection Technologies (Goal 2, Objective 6) (F)  
Objective:      To evaluate and recommend innovative data collection technologies  
Status:              Issues will be address by the FIN Committee as the need arises. This task is an ongoing activity.
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Objective:      To explore strategies for implementing in-season quota monitoring for the recreational fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico  
Status:              This issue was identified during the 2005 facilitated session as a topic that FIN needed to reexamine. In the past, FIN has recommended that in-season quota monitoring for recreational fisheries not be implemented; however, it appears the in-season quota monitoring may become a reality so FIN needs to address this subject. The FIN will work in conjunction with MRIP to explore this issue. Periodical reports from MRIP will be provided to the FIN Committee to keep them abreast of the progress on this issue.
- Task B23:      Identification of Databases for DMS Integration (Goal 3, Objective 5) (R)  
Objective:      Identify the commercial and recreational databases that should be integrated into the FIN DMS.  
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- Task B24:      Evaluation of Information Management Technologies (Goal 3, Objective 6) (F)  
Objective:      To evaluate and recommend innovative, cost-effective information management technologies.  
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- Task B25:      Long-term National Program Planning (Goal 4, Objective 1) (F)  
Objective:      Provide for long-term national program planning  
Status:              The FIN Committee members, GSMFC staff and ACCSP staff continue to attend Pacific RecFIN, PacFIN, ACCSP meetings as well as other pertinent meetings and coordinate activities as appropriate. This task is an ongoing activity.
- Task B26:      Coordination, Consistency and Comparability with Other Cooperative Marine Commercial and Recreational Fisheries Programs (Goal 4, Objective 2 and Objective 3) (F)  
Objective:      Coordinate FIN with other regional cooperative marine commercial and recreational fisheries programs and encourage consistency and comparability among regional programs over time.  
Status:              The FIN Committee members, GSMFC staff and ACCSP staff continue to coordinate activities with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission as well as attend the national NMFS FIS meetings. This is an ongoing activity.

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
Tuesday, August 10, 2010  
St. Croix, Virgin Islands**

Chairman **R. Hendon** called the meeting to order at 8:14 a.m. The following members and others were present:

**Members**

Read Hendon, *Chairman*, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Bob McMichael, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX  
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL  
Cara Hoar (*for Myron Fischer*), LDWF, Grand Isle, LA  
Terry Henwood, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS

**Others**

Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Kelly Donnelly, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL

**Staff**

Jeff Rester, *SEAMAP/Habitat Program Coordinator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Cheryl Noble, *Staff Assistant*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

**B. McMichael moved to accept the agenda as submitted. J. Mareska seconded and the motion passed.**

**Approval of Minutes**

**B. McMichael moved to approve the March 8, 2010 minutes as submitted. J. Mareska seconded and the motion passed.**

**Administrative Report**

**J. Rester** reported that since the March meeting there have been changes in some of the surveys due to the oil spill and that will be discussed under Agenda Item 8. He reminded the subcommittee to send their data and cruise reports to Lloyd Kirk as soon as possible after the surveys are completed. **B. McMichael** asked about ichthyoplankton data and **J. Rester** said NMFS is still in charge of that database. He said the environmental information goes through the GSMFC office but then it is forwarded to NMFS.



## Status of FY 2011 Budget

**J. Rester** reported the President's and Senate budgets have SEAMAP at \$5.140 million. **E. Roche** stated if the House mark is different, there will be a conference, but at this time, SEAMAP is level funded. She reminded the Subcommittee the final amount will be lower after Hollings and taxes are deducted.

## Activities and Budget Needs for FY 2011

At level funding, the FY2011 budget will be (approximately):

FL	\$559,421.00
LA	\$447,420.00
USM	\$442,106.00
TX	\$137,335.00
AL	\$222,575.00
GSMFC	\$259,474.00
TOTAL	\$2,068,331.00
NMFS	\$ 848,234.00

**Florida** – **B. McMichael** said Florida would continue the <sup>summer</sup> ~~four~~ trawling programs and the archiving center at level funding.

**Alabama** – **J. Mareska** said Alabama would continue all cruises at level funding.

**Mississippi** – **R. Hendon** said Mississippi would continue all SEAMAP cruises at level funding. The longline survey was funded with supplemental funds and they will try to continue the survey. This is the fifth year of a five-year cycle and they have rollover boat time and if the Subcommittee agrees, Florida can use the time for the fall trawl survey. The Subcommittee agreed to the request.

**Louisiana** – **C. Hoar** said Louisiana will continue all surveys but with administrative changes and the oil spill, manpower has been an issue and they are behind on some of the surveys.

**Texas** – **F. Martinez** said Texas will continue the winter, summer, and fall bottom trawl surveys but they will discontinue the spring longline and concentrate on the summer survey. They will continue at level funding.

**E. Roche** informed the Subcommittee of the balances of the supplemental funds and when they will expire. She said if extensions are needed she needs thirty days notice before the expiration date. All of the states said they will use their supplemental funds before the expiration.

**GSMFC – J. Rester** said GSMFC would continue the administration of the program and data management at level funding of \$259,474.

**NMFS – T. Henwood** said that all of the fall surveys were completed. He said after the oil spill, NMFS has not completed any of the SEAMAP surveys. They also had problems with the vessel. They hope to continue all of the SEAMAP surveys in the future but he does not know how the oil spill will affect the NMFS surveys. Sampling will probably increase but NMFS will need more manpower and vessels. He will keep the Subcommittee informed.

The Subcommittee discussed the fact that SEAMAP is the only long-term fishery independent database in the Gulf of Mexico. **J. Rester** said he has had numerous requests for the data and there have been changes in protocols so the operations manual needs to be updated. He suggested after the October meeting the Subcommittee should meet or the trawl work group to update the operations manual. He said he has informed all who have requested data that some changes have been made to the trawling protocols.

**J. Rester** asked if the Subcommittee agreed with the budget breakdown and they replied yes. **R. Hendon** reminded the Subcommittee that next year will be the start of a new 5-year cycle and they should check with their grants department to make sure all funds are spent before the end of the cycle. **K. Donnelly** said there is a possibility to extend as long as there is no duplication in effort. If an extension is granted, the funds can be spent in the next time period but she must receive the extension request thirty days prior to the end date.

**E. Roche** asked the Subcommittee to submit their new proposals as soon as possible. She said she can ask for them to be pre-reviewed and when there is confirmation on the budget, the funds will be available. If the original proposal is more or less than 5% of what is actually received, they will have to submit amended budgets. She suggested the Subcommittee use an April start date, if possible.

**J. Rester** said another thing the Subcommittee needs to do is prioritize all of the surveys. He said new surveys were started with supplemental funds but said the Subcommittee needs to decide if they want to continue these surveys or concentrate on the long term surveys. He said with the oil spill, there will probably be more funds available for sampling, but after a while extra funding may not be available. **B. McMichael** said any new surveys should be gulf wide and the core long term programs should be supported first. **T. Henwood** asked if any of the data from the new surveys have been analyzed. **J. Rester** asked if NMFS had protocols to analyze the data or evaluate new surveys to help the Subcommittee determine if they should continue the new surveys. **T. Henwood** said the Subcommittee needs to look at the data and determine if it is worth continuing the survey. **R. Hendon** said before the Subcommittee meets next time, each member should have a write up on what they plan to do and justify each survey on how it will comply with historical SEAMAP sampling. It was suggested to have the work groups review this. After discussion, the Subcommittee decided the members need to review the

surveys to prioritize because they are familiar with funding. **J. Rester** will add this as an agenda item for the October meeting.

### **SEAMAP Sponsored Fishery Independent Data Workshop**

J. Rester said all meeting arrangements have been made, speakers have been invited and travel authorizations have been mailed for the workshop to convene September 21-23, 2010 in St. Petersburg, Florida. He said NMFS is now planning to sponsor a fishery independent data collection workshop to discuss sampling for the oil spill and detecting potential changes due to the oil spill. They have scheduled a workshop for August 25-27 in Miami. He said that he is concerned that this workshop may affect attendance to the SEAMAP workshop. He asked the Subcommittee if they wished to cancel or postpone the SEAMAP workshop. After discussion, the Subcommittee decided not to cancel because arrangements have already been made and NMFS gave assurances their people would attend both workshops. The Subcommittee was in agreement that both workshops have the potential to produce very useful information. **R. Hendon** asked all members to try to attend both workshops.

### **Oil Spill Related Fishery Sampling**

**J. Rester** asked the Subcommittee what other types of sampling besides SEAMAP are the states doing due to the oil spill. He said he knows the states are taking extra samples. He said Lisa Desfosse wants SEAMAP to coordinate this so the states' are not sampling in the same areas. **R. Hendon** said Mississippi had to modify the June survey because the oil spill was in the area to be sampled so they coordinated with NMFS to do the southern part of the survey area and Mississippi shifted just east of Destin to do some of Florida's trawl samples. It was a three-day survey instead of the normal four but other than that, the long-term surveys are continuing as usual. **T. Henwood** said with the closing because of the oil spill, NMFS has been focused on seafood inspection, collecting fish and testing for hydrocarbons. They have chartered boats to do this and have been trying to keep up with the stock assessment surveys. **J. Mareska** said their SEAMAP stations were in the oil so they did not sample because they did not want to run the boats through it, so that was a modification to the fishery independent sampling. Since late April and early May they have been doing additional baseline sampling. This has not really affected the inshore sampling but has affected the ability to process a lot of the samples. **F. Martinez** said Texas has not been affected by the oil spill so their surveys are continuing as usual. **B. McMichael** said the SEAMAP sampling has not changed but they have taken additional samples. He said they have also been collecting NOAA seafood safety samples. NMFS requested the summer survey be moved forward 2 weeks and the last two days of that cruise were done in state waters to collect samples so Florida waters could be reopened. **C. Hoar** said there were no adjustments to their SEAMAP cruises. She said they had to increase state water sampling and focus on tissue samples. She said the only issue they have had is scheduling the Pelican. If the Navy schedules a cruise, they get priority.

**J. Rester** asked C. Hoar the status of Louisiana acquiring another vessel and she said they are still working on that. **T. Henwood** stated not having enough vessels is a common issue with all of the SEAMAP programs.

### **SEAMAP Strategic Planning**

**J. Rester** updated the Subcommittee on the SEAMAP strategic planning. He said the chairs and coordinators had a meeting in Pascagoula with Lisa Desfosse this past May to discuss what is envisioned for SEAMAP in the future. He said it has been recognized that more fishery independent sampling is needed and funds should be allocated to support the sampling. The goal is to make sure SEAMAP is the organization that receives the funds to do this fishery independent sampling. This will be discussed further at the joint meeting. He said the Gulf has documented their surveys and any new surveys with justifications and this information will be implemented in the plan.

### **Framework for Developing the 2011-2015 Management Plan**

**J. Rester** discussed the framework for developing the 2011-2015 Management Plan (handout) that was developed in May. He said Melissa Paine, the ASMFC SEAMAP Coordinator is in charge of updating the plan. He said he has not received any comments from the Subcommittee on the framework and stressed how important the new plan will be for the SEAMAP program. He said the new plan will be very different from the last plan, a total rewrite, and he feels the Subcommittee should view the plan as a high priority and devote as much time as possible on updating the Gulf section. They should concentrate on the strategic planning and other initiatives SEAMAP plans for the future. The Coordinators will write the draft then it will be distributed to the members for their comments. **R. Hendon** agreed that this should be a high priority for the Subcommittee and asked each member to please spend time reviewing the draft and make comments when they receive it from J. Rester.

### **Other Business**

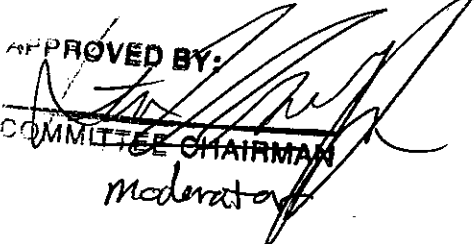
**B. McMichael** said Kim Williams, the Ichthyoplankton Archiving Curator, emailed him to inform the Subcommittee that the fish collections are now a part of the chain of custody and requestors will no longer be able to receive actual fish samples, only data. She said the collection may be put on FISHNET2. **J. Rester** said NMFS is responsible for the Ichthyoplankton database and it has been brought to his attention that all requests have to go through Bonnie Ponwith and some people requested data several months ago and have not received it. He said this concerns him because making the data available is part of SEAMAP's responsibility and it should not take that long. He said that he realizes NMFS personnel are busy with the oil spill but there have been many requests for it. He asked how it can be put on FISHNET2 if it has to be approved by Bonnie Ponwith.

**B. McMichael** commented that the new design for the trawl sampling is good.

**J. Rester** asked if the Subcommittee should have another station location meeting before the fall groundfish survey. The Subcommittee said **B. Pellegrin** will generate the stations then they will meet either by conference call or email.

**There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:42 a.m.**

**OYSTER TECHNICAL TASK FORCE  
MEETING SUMMARY & ASSIGNMENTS  
August 18-19, 2010  
New Orleans, LA**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
Moderator

Moderator, **Steve VanderKooy**, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following members were in attendance:

**Members**

Brian Lezina, LDWF, Lacombe, LA  
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  
Richard Fulford, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS

**Staff**

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Debbie McIntyre, GSMFC, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Thomas Soniat, UNO, New Orleans, LA

**Adoption of Agenda**

**VanderKooy** reviewed the agenda and noted that the agenda could be modified as needed.

**Approval of Minutes**

**VanderKooy** handed out two sets of minutes for review and approval – one set from the St. Petersburg meeting held January 12-14, 2010, and the other from the conference call on March 22, 2010.

*Supan moved to approve both the January and March minutes as written, Weeks seconded and the motion passed.*

**Introduction and Housekeeping Items**

**VanderKooy** stated that the hard copy of the FMP everyone received to use for this meeting is the most current copy to date. If anyone had more recent versions, they should forward immediately after the meeting. Any changes made to the existing versions would be sent out on CD for all to

use. Please use the CD version as the updated copy of each section.

**VanderKooy** encouraged all to make sure citations and references are complete and to provide him copies of references for the GSMFC library.

### **Oyster Modeling for Stock Assessment – Dr. Thomas Soniat, UNO**

**Dr. Thomas Soniat** (UNO) provided an overview of the model he, Eric Powell and John Klinck have been working on. **Soniat's** model ultimately should become a sustainability index which can be used for assessing how much material can be taken off a reef. This model is not a top-down one, it is more of a bottom-up approach. They looked at the data available first and then developed a model around it. The model is being applied to Louisiana's Coastal Area 2 which is the primary location of the public reefs and seed grounds; however, it should be broadly applicable to the northern Gulf.

The problem with oyster populations is that you have to allow a certain amount of the oysters to reach a large size and allow them to die in place to provide shell for future recruitment. Therefore, there are two requirements for sustainability of oysters in a system. The first is that the number of animals or the biomass must remain the same over the year and be consistent over time. The second requirement is that the shell volume must remain the same over time. Since recruitment is less of a restriction, shell availability will almost always be the controlling factor, at least in the Gulf of Mexico. In order to expand a harvest, you must increase both biomass and the amount of shell in a system.

Most of the state resource agencies have some data on their reefs and oyster populations for their own assessment. The annual stock assessment provides measures of oyster densities, the number available, the size classes of those oysters, and the total reef area. These are put into a model which grows, kills, and removes through harvest or 'fishes' the oysters. Shells of dead oysters are added to the reef and the shells that are fished are debited as they are removed.

**Soniat** has created an electronic portal that allows a manager to enter their data, and make changes to fishing pressure over the season, the material which is harvested (cultch, seed, or sack oysters), and the amount of time you want to grow the oysters out (forward projection). The output provides the total sack and seed oyster that is available, the amount removed by fishing activities, and together, the model estimates the total volume of shell that can be removed by fishing without depleting the reef of shell for next year's recruits. This value now becomes the 'sustainability criterion'. Now the resource manager can simply enforce the maintenance of shell volume. Shell can be removed as sack, seed, or cultch in any combination by fishermen, but when the target or benchmark shell volume is reached, the fishery removals are shut down.

**Soniat** answered numerous questions and reported that while a lot of the variables being used in the current example model are derived by Powell for Delaware Bay, there is considerable joint effort to produce these values appropriate to the Gulf and specifically Louisiana. **Fulford** and **Berrigan** both noted that the discussion of this model should be included in the FMP's stock assessment section. **VanderKooy** would provide a more detailed narrative of the presentation within a few weeks.

## Draft Review

During the remainder of the meeting, each section was reviewed (the least complete first) and certain necessary tasks were identified and assigned with specific deadlines.

### **ASSIGNMENTS BY TASK FORCE MEMBERS:**

**ALL:** (Deadlines vary)

- Make sure that **VanderKooy** has all citations and references for library
- Each state rep to review maps & email **VanderKooy** with recommendations/changes
- Review overview of history & state numbers and submit to **Herrmann**. **DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30**
- Provide **VanderKooy** with cultch planting info
- Help **Lezina** re: medical waste info (human antibiotics and medicines discharged into river systems via sewage treatment, etc)
- Review Management Section (12) very carefully & get changes to **Berrigan**
- Provide **Berrigan** with some good examples of what has and has not worked in the states re: Section 12.4.6 Measures to Increase Utilization
- Provide **Herrmann** with each state's legal description of whole, live oysters, unshucked. **DEADLINE: AUGUST 27**
- Section 13: Everybody needs to review his/her specific sections and send changes to **VanderKooy ASAP**
- Section 7.2: Each state rep needs to review his section to determine if totally complete
- Law Enforcement: Review individual state info & forward changes to **Goodrich**
- Each state to provide one or two paragraphs to **VanderKooy** re: Cultch planting history. **DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 10**

**Berrigan:**

- Email to **Lezina** "more recent papers" re: Section 5 Threats to Survival – Effects of Petroleum on Oysters
- Ask Heil to review Public Health info (**VanderKooy** will forward this section to **Berrigan** for Heil)
- Work on Limited Access section and see if this has worked in the oyster fishery
- Non-commercial reef planting – do this section
- Locate updated cultch planting chart for Florida and forward to **VanderKooy**
- Provide additional text on Florida fishing history to **Herrmann** if needed **DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30**

**Fulford:**

- Has one brief section to complete in assessment
- Get with Powell after receiving **Soniat** summary from **VanderKooy**



- Insert table @ 13.9 (Stock Assessment)

**Geiger: DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 10**

- Write an opening paragraph for Section 3.0 to define “MU” (can borrow from Section 12 if useful)
- Flesh out section 3.1.1.3.4
- Address “Genetic Methodology” in Public Health Section 6
- Work with **Berrigan** and provide additional text on Florida fishing history to **Herrmann** if needed **DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30**

**Goodrich:**

- Revisit distributing the management section to LEC to make sure they do not have any changes
- Address 12.4.4.4 (Limited Access) highlighted list under #2 training, officer sharing, etc. & get that info to **Berrigan**

**Herrmann:**

- Provide text to **Berrigan** re: Effects on downstream reefs
- Get information on AL history of regs/laws to **Goodrich** (Section 7)
- Continue adding to fisheries section as state reps provide text

**Keithly: DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 10**

- Send Excel spreadsheets to **VanderKooy**
- Contact **Robinson** re: missing TX info
- Work with **Supan** re: hypersalinity & PHPs

**Lezina: DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30**

- Contact Chris Nelson re: tweaking some “Threats to Survival” info
- Review Section 5 & strike what is not necessary
- Provide **Goodrich** with missing Section 7 info on LA history of regs/laws
- Provide text on Louisiana fishing history to **Herrmann DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30**

**Randall:**

- Provide text to **Berrigan** re: Effect on downstream reefs
- Get with **VanderKooy** to provide **Goodrich** with a history of MS laws/regs
- Provide text on Mississippi fishing history to **Herrmann DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30**

**Robinson:**

- Provide info to **Keithly** re: Description of Economic Characteristics
- Provide text on Texas fishing history to **Herrmann** **DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30**

**Supan:**

- Work with **Keithly** re: Hypersalinity & PHPs **DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 10**

**VanderKooy:**

- Summarize **Soniat's** presentation & forward to **Fulford** for review & inclusion in FMP
- Send out CD with FMP changes from this meeting
- Attempt to get permission artist to use the group's photo choice for the FMP cover
- Provide state section information to **Robinson**
- Send out reminders every two weeks re: state fisheries section information **DEADLINE SEPTEMBER 30**
- Include state fisheries spreadsheets on CD
- Put description & drawing (general oyster parts) from old FMP back in new FMP
- Forward **Weeks'** most recent section to the group
- Work with **Randall** on the history of laws/regs for MS and get same to **Goodrich**
- Provide Public Health section to **Berrigan** to get to Heil for his review
- Insert a Tong drawing in the document

**Weeks:**

- Email info to **Lezina** re: Section 5 and effects of petroleum on oysters
- Send **VanderKooy** most recent copy of socio section so that he can update his copy and forward same to group

**Team Section Reviews**

All sections will be reviewed by paired task force members for the next, and hopefully final, meeting. The team assignments are as follows:

***SECTION REVIEW ASSIGNMENTS***

<b>Section</b>		<b>Reviewers</b>
3.0	Description of Stocks Comprising the Management Unit (Mu)	Supan, Lezina
4.0	Description of the Habitat of the Stock(s) Comprising the Management Unit	Arnold, Randal
5.0	Population Survival	Arnold, Fulford

6.0	Public Health Concerns Introduction and History	Heil, Robinson, Goodrich
7.0	Fishery Management Jurisdiction, Laws and Policies Affecting the Stocks Throughout Their Range	Herrmann, LEC, and ALL for State Info
8.0	Description of Fishery Activities Affecting Stocks	ALL
9.0	Description of Economic Characteristics, Processing, Marketing/Distribution and Trade Organizations	Berrigan, Lezina
10.0	Social and Cultural Characteristics of Oyster Fishermen and Their Communities	Herrmann, Goodrich, Keithly
11.0	Oyster Assessment and Population Dynamics	Robinson, Geiger
12.0	Management Considerations and Recommendations	Weeks, Fulford
13.0	Research and Data Needs	Weeks, Supan
16.2	Aquaculture/Mariculture	Berrigan, Heil, Keithly
16.3	<i>Management Issues Related to Public Health</i>	Berrigan, Heil
16.4	Growing Area Classifications	Berrigan, Heil
16.5	Cultch Materials	Berrigan, Randal
16.6	Gulf of Mexico Oyster Atlas	ALL

It was ultimately decided that the FMP data would end as of year 2008 (NOAA's 2009 landings data would not be final until after draft completion).

The group discussed meeting in November in Galveston, Texas, to finalize the document.

*With no further business, Supan made the motion to adjourn, the motion was seconded by Goodrich, and the group adjourned at 11:05 a.m.*

State/Federal Fisheries Management Committee

**Draft Agenda**

Girdwood, Alaska

Tuesday, August 24, 2010 -- 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

1. Call to Order
  2. Approval of Agenda
  3. Discussion and Final Approval of Funding Activities for 2011
    - a. Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities
    - b. Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data
      1. Administration of Puerto Rico
    - c. Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida
    - d. Operation of FIN Data Management System
      1. Hiring of part-time Metadata Coordinator
    - e. Trip Ticket Program Implementation and Operations in Mississippi
    - f. Trip Ticket Program Operations in Alabama
    - g. Trip Ticket Program Operations in Louisiana
    - h. Trip Ticket Program Operations Texas
    - i. Recreational/Commercial Biological Sampling
    - j. At-sea Sampling for Catch and Discards Data from Large-capacity For-Hire Boats in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida
    - k. Other Activities
  4. Other Business
- Adjourn

APPROVED BY:   
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**ARENARIUS TECHNICAL TASK FORCE**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**September 14-15, 2010**  
**Naples, FL**

The Arenarius Technical Task Force (TTF) was called to order at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 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, Dickinson, TX
- Ron Mezich, FWC, Tallahassee, FL

**Staff**

- Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS
- Debbie McIntyre, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Chairman Adams** opened the meeting by asking each participant to introduce themselves. **VanderKooy** went over a couple housekeeping items and gave his intentions for the meeting and **Debbie McIntyre**, the IJF Staff Assistant, was introduced to the group.

**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 November 18-19 meeting in Naples, FL were reviewed. *The motion to accept the minutes was made by Mareska; it was seconded by McCawley and passed unanimously.*

**Assignment Updates**

*3.0 Description of Stock*

**Bowling** accomplished all tasks from the prior meeting's minutes.

**Mareska's** age and growth tasks are done and this section is complete.

**Kinsey** did not attend the meeting but her work in section 3.0 has been furnished to the committee.

**VanderKooy** reviewed and corrected the geographic distribution. The group also reviewed the charts in this section. **VanderKooy** stated that he will go through and verify the references and clean them up.

**McCawley** will check on the Tringali reference and determine if a newer publication has resulted from the earlier report which is currently cited.

**Porche** is still working on the migration and movement information and will have it as soon as possible.

The group, as a whole, indicated that they were comfortable with Section 3.

#### *4.0 Description of the Habitat*

**Mezich** reported that this section is in good shape. The section was reviewed and changed where necessary. The Deepwater Horizon oil disaster will not be referred to in this document but the effects of oil on the environment will be referred to in general terms. **Mezich** will provide a reference section to VanderKooy and it will be pretty much finished.

#### *5.0 Fishery Management Jurisdictions*

**VanderKooy** encouraged all task force members to review their own states material individually. Much of the information in the first half of the section is boilerplate and it is necessary to sift carefully through, assuring that all information applies specifically to sand/seatrout.

**Kinsey** needs to update the LA section. TX, FL and AL portions are good to go. **Porche** will check the MS section.

#### *6.0 Description of Fishing Activities*

This section was revisited to assure that everything has been completed. **VanderKooy** stated that all data provided should be final through 2008.

**VanderKooy** instructed everyone to concentrate their reports on these numbers.

**McCawley** and **VanderKooy** will double check to assure that all the figures and tables go through 2008.

**Kinsey** needs to provide some updated information for LA. **VanderKooy** will contact **Kinsey** to let her know about the data needed but, if anyone else needs anything from **Kinsey**, they should call her personally.

## 7.0 Economic Characteristics

**Adams** was not able to use the targeted trip data that he received from Gregg Bray. The survey was discussed and explained and will be included in these minutes.

**Adams** will cover 7.2.1 through 7.2.4.

At this point, the group broke apart to allow them time to work on their individual fisheries sections, while **Adams** and **VanderKooy** reviewed the Sociology section in Isaacs' absence.

## 8.0 Social & Cultural Framework

**VanderKooy** and **Adams** reviewed the revised section with the task force members. **VanderKooy** asked everyone to review this section carefully, specific to their own state.

**VanderKooy** will contact **Kinsey** regarding her contribution to Louisiana anglers and fishermen in this section.

The data provided by Gregg Bray may not be useful for this document but will be available if anyone wants to review it for future use elsewhere. **VanderKooy** e-mailed the spreadsheet to all the members during the meeting.

## 9.0 Regional Research Needs & Data Requirements

A bulleted list was generated by each author specifically identifying data and research needs related to their sections. The group reviewed and modified some of these items as the list was developed. Any additional items should be sent to **VanderKooy** for inclusion or during the material review prior to the final meeting.

### Team Assignments

In an effort to streamline the review process, all completed sections will be reviewed by paired task force members for the next, and hopefully final, meeting. The reviews are to be returned to the original author for their consideration and approval. If there is a need for more information, more literature, or corrections to be made, the **REVIEWERS SHOULD MAKE ANY AND ALL NECESSARY CHANGES** to the copy of the sections provided after the meeting by **VanderKooy**. **ALL CHANGES SHOULD BE MADE USING TRACK CHANGES** so the author has the opportunity to review them first. The team assignments are as follows:

### **Review Assignments – November 30 Deadline**

<b>Section 03</b>	<b>Mareska &amp; Isaacs</b>
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<b>Section 04</b>	<b>Mareska &amp; Porche</b>
<b>Section 05</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Section 06</b>	<b>Adams &amp; Bowling</b>
<b>Section 07</b>	<b>McCawley &amp; Kinsey</b>
<b>Section 08</b>	<b>Mareska &amp; Bowling</b>
<b>Section 09</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>All</b>

**Next Meeting**

**VanderKooy** discussed the next meeting with the group and emphasized that this meeting should be the last. Those present expressed a desire to meet in New Orleans and **VanderKooy** agreed to try to arrange a meeting there. Due to busy schedules, this meeting will probably not take place until the second or third week in January, 2011. **VanderKooy** would send out a Doodle Calendar for everyone to indicate their availability later in the fall.

**Other Business**

**VanderKooy** will send out the changes electronically to the Arenarius Profile in the next couple of weeks. He will also send out the final artwork for all to approve.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m. on Wednesday, September 15<sup>th</sup>.



APPROVED BY:

  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC SEAMAP SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
Monday, October 18, 2010  
Clearwater, FL**

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

**Members**

Read Hendon, *Chairman*, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Bob McMichael, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX  
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL  
Schuyler Dartz (*for Myron Fischer*), LDWF, Grand Isle, LA  
Butch Pellegrin, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS

**Others**

Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Kelly Donnelly, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Karen Mitchell, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, MS  
Camp Matens, *Commissioner*, Baton Rouge, LA  
Joey Shepard, *Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Steve Meyers, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD  
Judy Jamison, GSAFF, Tampa, FL

**Staff**

Larry Simpson, *Executive 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**

**B. McMichael** moved to accept the agenda as submitted. **F. Martinez** seconded and the motion passed.

**Approval of Minutes**

**B. McMichael** said to change "four trawling programs" to "summer trawling program" in the Florida section under the *Activities and Budget Needs* agenda item. **J. Mareska** moved to accept the August 10, 2010 minutes with this change. **B. McMichael** seconded and the motion passed.

## Administrative Report

**J. Rester** said the cooperative agreements have to be submitted in the near future. **K. Donnelly** asked the Subcommittee to submit the cooperative agreements by November 1<sup>st</sup> or as close to that date as possible. She said this is the beginning of a new 5-year cycle and a narrative that is appropriate for all 5 years needs to be submitted also. The agreements should be emailed/mailed to her first and she will have them reviewed before the member's submits to grants online. Once everything is finalized, she will send the grants.gov federal opportunity number so the proposals can be submitted online. She asked if possible, to move the start dates to February or March.

**J. Rester** reminded everyone to use their supplemental funds before the expiration date. Extensions may be requested with 30 days notice.

**J. Rester** reported that since the last meeting, the Fall Plankton Survey took place and there were no reports of any adverse impacts by oil or weather and most of the stations were completed. The Fall Groundfish Survey started and Louisiana and Mississippi have completed their portions. He said everything worked fine with B. Pellegrin generating a random list of stations and the Subcommittee deciding who will do the stations. He said they will continue to do that in the future but reminded the Subcommittee to contact each other if they cannot get a station and someone else will cover it if possible.

**L. Simpson** asked if the sampling in the closed areas due to the DWH will be added to the SEAMAP database. **J. Rester** stated it should and all data from that timeframe will be well documented in the comments section. **R. Hendon** stated the same protocols were used during this time but they did do extra sampling. **B. McMichael** said Florida sampled on the **WEATHERBIRD** and he will submit that data but it will have to be flagged in the database that this is not a SEAMAP vessel.

**J. Rester** then reminded the Subcommittee to submit cruise reports within 60 days after the survey. He said this makes it easier for reporting and data requests.

**J. Rester** said rewriting of the management plan will begin soon. He said there will be major changes to the plan and the Coordinators will do a draft then they will send that to the members for their input. He asked the Subcommittee to please make this a priority when they receive the draft. They plan to have a finalized copy to submit to the TCC at the March 2011 meeting for approval and then to the Commissioners for approval.

**J. Rester** asked the Subcommittee when they want to have the Shrimp/Groundfish Work Group meeting that was discussed at the August meeting. The Subcommittee decided to have the meeting on December 1<sup>st</sup> at the GSMFC office and they will incorporate changes into the operations manual that have been made to SEAMAP protocols, develop protocols for inshore trawl sampling, discuss adding depth stratum back to picking the SEAMAP stations, and discuss certifying the **WEATHERBIRD** for SEAMAP sampling in Florida. It was also suggested to have the longlining and reef fish work group meet.

**J. Rester** said three Atlases were printed this year and reminded the Subcommittee that they discussed changing the Atlas format after the 2007 Atlas was completed. After discussion on reformatting the Atlas the Subcommittee suggested:

- Keep the introduction (summary) section and move the data request contact information to the beginning of the document
- Include information about the new surveys such as number of stations, catches, dates, etc.
- Leave the maps, abundance tables and species list for each survey
- Delete the environmental table

It was suggested to put links to the data on the CD. **J. Rester** stated they do not do that because they like to keep track of who is requesting the data and they want to be able to interact with the person requesting the data. They can ask what the data is being used for and if the data is not complete they will be able to tell the person at that time. He said they are also working on the web mapping site where people can query the data and hopes to have something for the Subcommittee to review by the end of the year. They will also have the cruise reports available through the website.

#### **SEAMAP Fishery Independent Data Workshop**

**J. Rester** said the workshop went well and the attendance was good. There were a lot of interesting discussions and information shared. He said as far as he could tell the SEAMAP sampling design seems to be working well and it is very useful. There were no suggestions on changing any of the protocols. The data needs identified at the workshop are attached.

#### **Providing Fishery Independent Data to Improve Stock Assessments/Prioritizing SEAMAP Surveys**

**L. Simpson** informed the Subcommittee about new funding that would be available for stock assessment enhancement (SAE) as part of the oil spill disaster funding. He said the GSMFC would receive \$6 million and NOAA Fisheries \$4 million. The GSMFC portion will include administration costs, menhaden sampling, trip ticket support, log book reporting and fishery independent activities at \$3.1 million. He stated the amendment reads for the GSMFC's portion to "charter research vessels for conducting fishery independent sampling activities in order to improve the quantity of data and reduce the uncertainty in stock assessments conducted in the Gulf of Mexico." He said in order to do this it will mean increasing the fishery independent sampling and he wants the Subcommittee to provide guidance on how to accomplish this and what would be the best use of the funds. The start date for the funding will be January 2011 and it can be spread over five years. **J. Rester** stated that would be roughly \$600,000 a year for 5 years to increase fishery independent sampling. He suggested the Subcommittee prioritize the data needs that were suggested from the workshop. **L. Simpson** said he will be meeting with the Advisory Committee in November and he needs a priority list with logistics before then. After an extensive discussion, the following is what the Subcommittee decided would be the best use of the funds. **J. Rester** will contact the Subcommittee for more information on each survey and then provide L. Simpson a more detailed list with funding amounts before the meeting:

- Continue the Florida fall trawl survey - \$250,000 with Florida doing the work
- Expansion of vertical long line targeting reefish. Alabama currently has a contract with DISL for \$60,000. The approximate cost is \$5,000.00/cruise. There will need to be additional money for processing otoliths. If smaller boats are used it would cost approximately \$2,500 per day plus scientific crew. For Florida it will cost \$300,000 to do 3 regions for 10 days twice a year. Possible amount for gulfwide would be \$760,000.
- Loop Current sampling after 2011 – \$110,000 – includes identification of bluefin larvae. Mississippi can continue the survey now. This number is for boat time (\$80K) plus processing – sample ids, no sorting center cost because they sort the samples themselves for bluefin tuna larvae – everything else is archived or sent off.
- Expanded seasonal trawl surveys – will need NMFS to participate but **B. Pellegrin** said unless they charter vessels he does not know if they can do this. **R. Hendon** stated the SEAMAP budget will have to be doubled to provide seasonal coverage. Florida's summer cruise with staffing is \$300,000.
- Red Drum sampling – the Subcommittee does not have a cost estimate at this time. It will depend on the scope of work. They will have to decide if they want to just collect specimens for age purposes or tag and recapture. Protocol needs to be set up to even try to come up with a number.

**R. Hendon** stated that J. Rester and the Subcommittee will have to work with NMFS on logistics for the sampling. They will have to make sure they have the proper people on board to do species identification, processing, etc. **J. Rester** asked if there have been any discussions as far as contracting with the states to do the work or with contractors to rent their vessels. **K. Mitchell** stated this is in the beginning stages and no specifics have been worked out.

### Election of Chairman

**B. McMichael** moved to elect **Read Hendon** as chairman. **F. Martinez** seconded and the motion passed unanimously. **J. Mareska** moved to elect **B. McMichael** as vice chairman. **F. Martinez** seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

### Other Business

**K. Mitchell** said she has received several final reports on the supplemental funding and she needs more information including a final budget breakdown. She will send a template to the Subcommittee for them to use when submitting the final reports.

**With there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.**

## ATTACHMENT

### Data Needs Identified at the SEAMAP Fishery Independent Workshop

#### Plankton

Increase spatial coverage (more state sampling inshore/nearshore)  
Expand surveys among all seasons (red snapper, groupers, 'baitfish')  
Implementation of new technologies  
- genetic ID of eggs and small larvae  
- in situ imaging  
Addition of gear for discrete depth sampling (MOCNESS)  
Larval ageing

#### Juveniles (Groundfish Survey)

- 1) maintain Florida fall trawl survey
- 2) increase temporal and spatial (?) coverage
- 3) benthic habitat designation – sediment classifications (remotely sensed with ground-truthing)
- 4) provide lower trophic web ecosystem components (diet, age, species-specific)
- 5) sampling for Sargassum and associated species

Discussion was on adding depth strata to the stat zones prior to random draw. This would ensure coverage over all areas.

Recommendation was to add a depth stratum.

Add in sediment grabs on all sampling

Persistent comments throughout were the need for more bottom mapping. How to share those data that are out there and how to share new mapping data as it's generated.

#### Long-line survey

Expand through South Florida

Expand sample size everywhere

In order to increase sample size, evaluate possibly going to more sets, but smaller gear sets (1/2 mile, 1/4 mile, ?). At some point you get diminishing returns. No discussion on smaller sets and the lack of a bait plume.

#### Baitfish – Menhaden, scad, bumper, butterfish, anchovies, mullet

- incorporation of aerial surveys into design; must have groundtruthing,
- acoustic surveys,
- expand trawling surveys similar to FWC,
- To address #4 above, increase sampling effort during off seasons (winter plankton survey). Check on spatial distribution of surveys.

#### Reef-fish – snappers, groupers, jacks, triggerfish, tilefishes, wrasses

- Increase cross shelf surveys
- Habitat maps (Gulf GAME program)

- Improved sex ratio studies
- Expanded vertical hooked gear surveys (Alabama, Louisiana)
- Quantitative food web development
- Use of fish traps for increased collections of juveniles

#### Groundfish – croaker, spot, drums, flatfish, sheepshead

- Seasonal trawl surveys
- Aerial surveys for red drum
- Develop type of capture for adult red drum in coastal waters (purse seines, longlines) to be conducted during Fall (spawning season)
- Analyze gut contents from more SEAMAP cruises – evaluate NE Atlantic program

#### Coastal Pelagics – wahoo, king mackerel, dolphin, cobia, bluefish,

- Effort dedicated to specific habitats such as sargassum communities will provide data on juveniles of many of these species
- Aerial surveys
- Development of experimental hooking surveys – trolling

#### Highly migratory species – billfishes, tunas

- Increase sargassum surveys to collect juveniles
- Increase effort across oceanic fronts
- Aerial surveys for juveniles and adults (tunas)

#### Highly migratory species – sharks

- Increase inshore and offshore longline survey
- Development of pelagic longline survey (seasonal/species dependent)
- Inshore capture surveys (gillnets, trammel nets); review existing datasets for large teleost surveys and will likely get data on sharks
- Gut content analysis

#### Crustaceans – shrimp, crabs, lobster,

- Continued effort in southern WFS for pink shrimp
- Data needs on shrimp spawning periodicity (brown shrimp)
- Improved identification for larval shrimp (incorporate genetic data to confirm taxonomy)
- Quarterly/monthly sampling with focused effort in specific spatial areas
- Conduct standardization study of FI inshore gears for all Gulf state agencies
- Conduct early fall sampling directed at white shrimp

No  
Quorum

APPROVED BY:

\_\_\_\_\_  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC CRAB SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES 61st Annual Spring Meeting  
Monday, October 18, 2010  
Clearwater Beach, Florida**

**T. Floyd** called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and started with introductions. The following were in attendance:

**Members**

Kevin Anson, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Martin Bourgeois, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Ryan Gandy, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Traci Floyd, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

**Others**

Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FWC, Tallahassee, FL  
Ronnie Luster, CCA, Houston, TX  
Julie Anderson, LA Sea Grant/LSU, Baton Rouge, LA  
Frank Courtney, FWCC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Mark Schexnaydre, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Senator Thad Altman, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Tallahassee, FL

**Staff**

Steve VanderKooy, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Debbie McIntyre, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ralph Hode, EDRP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

*Bourgeois moved to accept the agenda. The motion was seconded by Anson and passed unanimously.*

**Approval of Minutes**

*Anson moved to accept the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Bourgeois and passed unanimously.*

It was brought to the attention of the Committee that **Bourgeois** would replace **Guillory** as a member of this committee. **VanderKooy** requested that, for the record, the Commission be provided a letter to indicate this change in committee appointment.

**BP Oil Effects in Gulf Blue Crabs**

A status report was given by each state's representative regarding the BP disaster.

**Bourgeois** reported that Louisiana has experienced incremental reopening of its waters to fishing and has currently opened all but 4% of its waters. At the height, Louisiana had 70% of its waters closed. **Bourgeois** reported that many of the crab fishermen were employed by BP in the VOO program. Louisiana may use some of the VOO for fishery independent sampling later. One of the effects following the BP disaster is that a lot of crab traps have been left out as fishermen started working for BP in the recovery effort. Preliminary landings obviously were down considerably through July; however, prices were high for both processed and live crabs. The big issue is still perception, with the public having serious concerns over safety even with the positive news from testing. This will be a lingering problem.

**Gandy** reported that the panhandle of Florida experienced minimal impacts from the oil disaster. A mail survey has been issued to blue crab fishermen looking at effort as well as issues related to the BP disaster. **Gandy** will provide this committee with a copy of the survey and results as they are available.

**Anson** stated that Alabama has continued to test crabs and they are not coming back with any problems. They have now reopened all waters to commercial harvest. As expected, effort in 2010 has been down but value continues to be high.

**Floyd** reported that Mississippi has had difficulty with public perception regarding seafood quality as well. To that end, the Department has produced a seafood safety newsletter to explain the testing and results. This newsletter has been provided to processors and to the general public. It was printed in both English and Vietnamese. All of the Mississippi state waters reopened after 8/21 for seafood consumption. Mississippi required that crab fishermen remove their traps from closed waters after the disaster and most complied.

### **MSC Certification of Louisiana Blue Crabs**

**Bourgeois** reported that Gary Bower of Pontchartrain Blue Crabs approached the LDWF to certify the Louisiana blue crab fishery as sustainable. The pre-assessment looked good so a grant was awarded to help pay for the cost of the full assessment by Scientific Certification Systems in California. One of the potential problems is the by-catch of Diamondback terrapins. Another issue will be the choice of models and the development of overfishing thresholds and triggers. They are probably a year or two away from getting certified but certification will be a requirement to sell domestic seafood in places like Walmart and Sam's in the near future.

### **Mercury Advisories Related to Blue Crab Consumption**

There was very little to report as follow-up on the advisory status for Gulf blue crabs in the 'Seafood Watch' type literature distributed at supermarkets around the country. The issue originated with Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) recommendations which have been picked up by a number of other 'watch dog' groups. The subcommittee pursued the source of the advisories being used with little success until Dave McKinney from EDF stepped in and we got some response. The source seemed to be old advisories for Port Lavaca, Texas and the EDF may need to update their advisories. The hope is that they would ask secondary groups to do the same and provide a green status to Gulf blue crabs if warranted. **VanderKooy** will get with



**Wagner** after this meeting to update and clarify this situation. This subcommittee will try to rekindle the issue in the next couple of months.

### **Status of Florida Lipofuscin Research**

**Gandy** reported that Florida has set up a blue crab hatchery and is successfully hatching and rearing crab larvae. They did not have enough to stock into their nursery facilities, however. In addition they harvested wild population crabs using otter trawls and captured 600 crabs approximately 2-4mm to go into ponds. Those crab experienced incredible growth rates reaching 40mm in only two weeks. It is anticipated that they could reach market size in only 6-8 months.

The lipofuscin techniques have been going well. FWRI has tested between left and right eyestalks with no difference detected. There was, however, a significant difference found between frozen and fresh samples. As a result, they will be harvesting only one eyestalk and processing only fresh samples. They are able to detect changes on a quarterly basis and should have substantial results by the next meeting. It is hoped that the wild known-age crabs in the ponds can be compared with additional wild caught bay crabs to validate the lipofuscin standards.

### **2009 Fishery-Independent Data**

**Perry** was not present at the meeting; therefore, no report was available.

### **Crab Trap Cleanup**

**Wagner** provided a written report. He reported that Texas held a cleanup prior to the March meeting and reported results at that meeting. At this time, the 2011 cleanup is scheduled for February 18-27 but there has been little discussion as of yet.

**Bourgeois** reported that Louisiana's cleanup was held in late Feb/early March at which time 477 traps were removed. There are no plans in 2011 to hold a cleanup even though there are a huge number of traps left in the water as a result of the BP disaster. If fishermen do not return to the fishery, there may be a large cleanup effort again in the future.

During Mississippi's cleanup last January, volunteers removed 349 traps, **Floyd** reported. Since that cleanup, an effort has been made to promote the derelict trap program at education and outreach events such as seafood festivals. There is also an opportunity for volunteers to sign up on the MDMR website. A number of volunteers have signed up for future cleanups, although none has been planned for 2011.

Alabama's cleanup was in March and **Anson** stated that no additional removals have occurred in 2010. At this time, Alabama has no plan for a program in 2011.

**Gandy** reported that there were a number of regional cleanups scheduled for 2010 in Florida but, with concern over the Deep Water Horizon oil disaster, two of the five which were scheduled to

take place along the west coast were cancelled. There is still a plan to have two cleanups scheduled for 2011. The department is considering holding cleanups on odd and even years for the opposite coasts. In addition to blue crabs, the department continued their stone crab trap and lobster trap removals with 5,800 + traps retrieved this year, primarily in the Keys region.

### State Reports

Florida – **Gandy** stated that landings in 2010 seem to be increasing by 25% and 11.8% for CPUE based on preliminary data. The decline of the last several years is finally reversed thanks to normal rainfall amounts. The FWC is conducting a statewide survey and they have developed a lab procedure targeting infections from Hematodinium and other viral type loads. Georgia had a near crash from Hematodinium under high salinities during the drought and the FWC is using funds through crab license sales to work on this issue.

Alabama – **Anson** indicated that landings have been declining through 2010, partly from the lack of effort due to the BP disaster, but also from continued drought conditions. Previous years had similar issues due to decreased fresh water inflow. The closing of state waters from oil only worsened that problem.

Mississippi – **Floyd** told the group that commercial license sales in Mississippi increased due to people trying to get in on the BP disaster money. Since then, a number of license holders were declined financial claims and have tried to get refunds from the state on their licenses. Due to the disaster, both landings and effort have been down. Fishermen were asked to remove their traps a couple of weeks after the state waters closed. **Floyd** reported on diamondback terrapins by-catch through outreach. To date, the MDMR has installed 2,004 traps with TEDs.

Louisiana – **Guillory** has been replaced on a number of the Commission's committees and **Bourgeois** is taking his place on the Crab Subcommittee. Landings and effort are down as reported earlier with around 50% of the fishermen still participating in the VOO program. At this time, 4% of the state waters remain closed and testing of crabs is ongoing with no detectable levels of contaminants being found in open areas.

Texas was not present but provided a written report. Landings in 2009 were higher from previous years but, so far in 2010 (through June), landings based on trip tickets have been down. Texas has purchased back nine crab licenses bringing the total to 54.

### Election of Chair

*Floyd nominated Gandy as committee chair. Anson seconded the nomination which was approved unanimously.*

### Adjourn

*Anson moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Bourgeois. With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.*

**TCC DATA MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
Monday, October 18, 2010  
Clearwater Beach, FL**

**APPROVED BY:**  
  
**COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN**

**Chairman Kerwin Cuevas** called the meeting to order at 8:30 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  
Michael Harden, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Steven Atran (proxy for John Froeschke) GMFMC, Tampa, FL  
David Gloeckner (proxy for Guy Davenport), NMFS, Miami, FL

**Staff**

David Donaldson, GSMFC Assistant Director, 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  
Janet Williams, GSMFC, FIN Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Alex Miller, GSMFC Staff Economist, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Michael Bailey, NOAA Fisheries, Tampa, FL  
Steve Brown, FWC/FWRI, Saint Petersburg, FL  
Geoff White, ACCSP, Arlington, VA  
Michael Bailey, NOAA Fisheries, Saint Petersburg, FL  
Beverly Sauls, FWC/FWRI, Saint Petersburg, FL  
Dale Diaz, MSDMR, Biloxi, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

**The agenda was approved and adopted as written.**

**Approval of Minutes**

**The minutes of the Data Management Subcommittee (DMS) meeting held on March 8, 2010 in Perdido Key, AL were approved as written.**

## Status of Biological Sampling Activities

Review of collection and analysis activities – **G. Bray** provided handouts that showed a comparison of the number of otoliths and length measurements collected in 2010 along with the associated sampling targets for the 15 FIN priority species. A large number of shortfalls were observed for most species. These shortfalls are largely due to limited sampling during the oil disaster along with difficulties posed by more restrictive fishing regulations for several species. **Bray** mentioned that shortfalls in commercial collections seem to be getting larger and more prevalent. Many of the states commented that the inability to handle and cut commercial landings has impacted their ability to collect commercial otolith and length samples.

**Bray** also mentioned that all states have delivered their 2009 age data except for Florida. GSMFC has loaded all of that data to the FIN Data Management System (DMS). Florida encountered some problems with data entry staff and is working with GSMFC to provide their 2009 age data in electronic format for direct loading to the data management system.

Status of web-based data entry program – **D. Bellais** reported that everything is working well and most states are utilizing both sample and age data entry screens. A fix is being implemented to add a year drop down box to the age entry screen to improve the efficiency of data entry.

## Status of Commercial Vessel Information Project

**D. Donaldson** reported that IA Team continues to work on identifying unique vessels. Donaldson stated the original model that required hull identification numbers (HIN) will not work. Some states do not collect HIN's. The new model utilizes coast guard or state vessel registration numbers and attempts to track those numbers over time. Each state will provide a spreadsheet with vessels, license information, and personal data. Using those variables you could uniquely identify persons and vessels and associate that with information in the Gulf FIN database. The current model requires state partners to submit these data annually or semi-annually. This model is based on similar elements from the old HIN based model. A final report should be delivered to GSMFC by January 1, 2011. The DMS will likely make recommendations on this report at the March 2011 meeting that will be forwarded onto FIN. Hopefully the contractor will be present at that meeting to present their report and answer questions. **Kasprzak** asked if HIN will still be collected even though it will not be the primary key variable under the new model.

**Donaldson** said the HIN would still provide useful information. **Cody** asked if the HIN's that were provided had data quality errors. **Donaldson** was not completely sure but thought that was a problem.

## Status of GulfFIN FOSS Project

**D. Bellais** provided a demonstration of the non-confidential data portal created for the Fisheries One Stop Shop (FOSS). This is a regional data sharing program created under NOAA's Fishery Information System (FIS) program. Much of the output functionality is not completed but **Bellais**

demonstrated a landings report using 2006 non-confidential data for Fisheries of the U.S. The Gulf FIN data is used for West Florida and ACCSP data are used for East Florida results. **Bellais** also showed the subcommittee a FOSS report using Alabama red snapper landings for 2006. The FOSS reports will be linked to metadata and any pertinent metadata is provided with the landing report. **S. Atran** asked if the reports were strictly commercial data. **Bellais** stated all current reports are commercial only and the programmers are working on including recreational data in the future. **Cody** asked if you could select multiple states and species at one time. **Bellais** said that functionality is available but more work needs to be completed to provide that full functionality. **Denson** asked if the website would inform them that confidential data was not being shown. **Bellais** stated the design plan is attempting to accomplish that. **Donaldson** mentioned the group needed to have a discussion for what various databases need to be included in Gulf FIN. One of the problems is some data bases are occurring in multiple locations but users are obtaining different results depending on the query tool being used. That topic will be discussed at the March 2011 DMS meeting.

### Discussion of Quota Monitoring/Trip Ticket Issues

**D. Donaldson** mentioned the SEFSC has a goal that all federally permitted commercial dealers are reporting electronically by early 2011. There is currently an electronic reporting tool being utilized by some dealers in the Gulf of Mexico through Bluefin Data Inc. Some additional work needs to be done to be able to track changes to data and also allow for negative reporting when no fishing is happening. The goal is to have weekly reporting and allow data to be collected through the electronic trip ticket system but uploaded through a secure business universe to SEFSC. This is going to be used for quota monitoring purposes only. **D. Gloeckner** mentioned this will be a federally mandated program. **Denson** asked when the regulation would be issued. **Gloeckner** mentioned that NOAA lawyers believe the regulatory authority already exists and the dealers just need to be notified. The states suggested that NOAA give them some prior notification before they inform dealers of the regulatory change. **S. Brown** asked if there is a list of all the federally permitted dealers. **Gloeckner** stated that list is available on the SERO website.

### Economic Activities

**Miller** reported about some proposed add-on questions NOAA Fisheries economists would like to include with the For-Hire Telephone Survey (FHS). **Miller** stated that economic data was listed as a high priority at a recent Saltwater Recreational Fishing Summit. The questions proposed would be total charter fee paid by anglers, how many gallons of fuel used, total amount paid for fuel, and type

of fuel purchased. Economists hope to track changes in fuel cost, track changes in charter fees based on reduction or increase in allowable catch, help quantify size of industry, and link price data to trip characteristics. **Miller** hopes to use the data to produce reports to share with the for-hire industry on a near real time basis. **B. Sauls** asked who those results would be shared with. **Miller** said the details have not been fully decided yet. **Kasprzak** asked when they would like to add the questions. **Miller** stated as soon as possible depending on what problems might prohibit a quick startup. Most of the states agreed that the questions are useful but the timing of adding additional work is bad. The current sampling levels are high and many captains are currently upset with the high frequency of

being contacted via the FHS. **Kasprzak** asked if there was an outreach plan in place for collected these questions. **Miller** stated nothing is in place yet but they would likely address that if approval is given for data collection. **Cody** stated he is concerned that tagging this onto the current FHS might not provide the best quality economic information. The subcommittee members seemed willing to attempt collecting these data provided we do not attempt this while the current sampling levels of 40% are in effect. The larger burden placed on respondents from the higher sampling levels has created some anxiety from for-hire captains participating in the FHS and adding economic questions could increase angler refusal rates. **B. Sauls** asked if the survey was asking anglers to break out their individual expenditures. **Miller** stated he thinks expenditures should be collected on an individual basis.

**Miller** also discussed the upcoming 2011 expenditure survey being added to the dockside intercept survey. The questionnaire looks similar to the 2006 survey. **Miller** will be working with the states to finalize the budget process over the next month. This survey is scheduled to start in January 2011. There will be a voluntary follow-up mail survey administered by Macro International that is a complementary part of this data collection process.

**Miller** updated the subcommittee on the inshore shrimp fishery economic survey. All of the data has been entered, collected, and cleaned. A preliminary analysis and has been run. **Miller** continues to work on the final analysis and report. He hopes to have the completed and available during the March 2011 GSMFC meeting. Funding has been secured to continue this data collection program in 2012.

**Miller** gave a brief update on the Economic Survey of Processors and Dealers. They have put together an inventory of processors and dealers and have awarded sub awards to University of Florida, University of South Alabama, Mississippi State University, Louisiana State University, and Texas A&M. The survey instrument is nearly completed and will soon be field tested with the hopes of putting it in the field November 1, 2010.

**Miller** gave a brief updates on the National Marine Recreational Use Economic Survey. They have recently completed some focus group work and are getting ready to start a pre-test of the web survey instrument. The goal is to implement the survey in early 2011.

**Miller** finished with a brief demonstration of the Interactive Fisheries Impact Tool. This allows users to query commercial and recreational economic impacts along with recreational fishing expenditures. **Miller** stated this data came from the 2006 expenditure data that was an add-on to the dockside intercept survey. He showed a basic query for the Gulf of Mexico recreational fishing economic impacts. The query tool provides result tables, charts, and clickable maps. **Donaldson** asked if GSMFC had a link to the NOAA query tool. **Miller** said there was not a link currently but there is a plan to add one in the near future.

## **Update on MRIP Gulf of Mexico For-Hire Logbook Project**

**B. Sauls** reported on the progress of the MRIP For-Hire Logbook pilot program being administered in the Panhandle of Florida and the Corpus Christi region of Texas. Participants are all federal reef fish or pelagic permit holders in both regions. This included 357 boats in the panhandle of Florida and 58 boats in Texas. Captains were made aware of their selection in this mandatory reporting program in June and July via certified letter from NOAA Fisheries. Three public meetings were held in July to provide more information on the data collection tools and allow vessel representatives to ask questions. In August the electronic reporting tool was available for testing and review. Data collection officially started September 1, 2010.

Currently there are 3 methods of validation including drive-by effort validation, dockside interviews, and at-sea observer trips. Drive-by validations are completed by state biologists confirming if boats are in or out and if out, whether they are fishing or not. Dockside validations are done by state biologists and collect trip information directly from the captain and crew. Dockside sites are randomly selected and biologists interview every vessel at the selected site. At-sea validations involve placing a biologist on the boat during a for-hire trip. This allows for more detailed collected of discarded fish data. Since September 1<sup>st</sup>, Florida has completed 21 dockside assignments and 8 at-sea trips. Texas completed 5 dockside validations and 4 at-sea trips in September.

The logbook compliance reporting results are not going as well as the validation process. Currently approximately 40% of the Florida vessels are non-compliant in providing logbook results. Texas has been able to reduce their non-compliance rate to 0%. Florida has about 50 participants that have requested a paper reporting tool. All of the Texas participants are reporting through the electronic reporting tool. Two additional biologists have been hired to work in Texas and three biologists have been hired in Florida. Florida is working hard to make personal contact with non-compliant captains and vessel representatives and help them in getting setup or delivering data. A few boats have been identified as being exempt even though they were in the federal permit list for the study region. Florida is documenting all attempts and successful contacts of non-compliant vessels. For those still not reporting after a certain period of time vessel representatives will receive a courtesy warning letter from NOAA Fisheries. If they still do not report after being sent the courtesy letter we will notify NOAA Fisheries and NOAA will review their cases prior to their permit renewal process. **Sauls** stated it has been better to implement this as a pilot program at first. Full implementation in the Gulf of Mexico would require a great deal of outreach and would need to be phased in over many geographic areas over a long period of time.

Some of the complaints from current participants are the species list is a little confusing, users are sometimes not sure if their inactivity reports have been submitted electronically, and participants have asked if they could be emailed a reminder each week. Many captains are also concerned about the additional reporting burden the logbook program has added. Many of these captains are participating in the for-hire telephone survey (FHS) although if they provide electronic logbook data in a timely manner they could be exempted from the FHS. Many boats also have commercial reporting requirements and get hit with dockside recreational surveys and biological sampling

programs. Captains have also stated they are upset that this program is linked to permit renewal process and they are getting nothing in return. **Cody** asked since red snapper will close towards the end of October and fishing activity will likely decrease will compliance get better or worse. **Sauls** stated she not sure how things will improve or deteriorate in the near future.

### **Discussion of Fish Tags related to Recreational Data Collection Activities**

The Gulf Council asked the subcommittee to address the issue of using fish tags as an effort limitation system or a data collection program. This is not a tag program where a physical marker would be inserted into the flesh of a fish. The concept is similar to a duck stamp where anglers are allowed to harvest the fish if they are awarded a tag. Currently MRIP is not addressing fish tags as a data collection tool. **S. Atran** mentioned the gag quota and recreational allocation is causing this to be a big issue. Under the current stock assessment and allocation the 2011 gag season could be severely limited. **Atran** mentioned a gag tag has potential as a data collection program but seems to have no strength as an effort limitation system. **Atran** wondered if the states had the infrastructure for assigning and monitoring tag distribution. **Donaldson** mentioned that fish tags work well in the bluefin tuna fishery but the size and scope of the gag fishery makes a data collection tool like fish tags much more difficult. **Denson** stated he was not in favor of a state run fish tag program and thinks it could be run over the internet from a centralized agency. **Kasprzak** asked how you would handle the distribution of tags between for-hire anglers and private boat anglers. **Atran** mentioned that consideration would have to be given to how to allocate for for-hire boats and private anglers. **Cody** cautioned against comparing a gag tag with any other fishery tag like tarpon or blue fin tuna because of the difference in scope of the fisheries. He also mentioned that the time to administer such a program is very large and there would be likely a great deal of resistance from the state of Florida for a gag tag. **Cody** also mentioned the Florida tarpon kill tag allows for culling which creates some higher levels of release mortality. A lack of enforcement also allows for tags to be removed dockside and reused hence allow for more harvest than originally intended. **Sauls** stated she would be more in favor or a special permit or tag coupled with a known sampling universe that would allow for improved data collection. That would allow for specialized surveys that could be directly sampling specific fish or fisheries. The states mentioned any tag with a fee would require state legislative change to allow them to collect it and enforce any rules associated with it. **Campbell** stated Texas would likely not be in favor of a gag tag since their landings are extremely low.

### **Status of Metadata Data Entry**

**D. Bellais** reported that GSMFC, Texas, and Louisiana have their metadata entered and published. Florida has all of their metadata entered into their own system and GSMFC is trying to link directly to that system. She reminded each state to continue entering, reviewing, and publishing their metadata. **Donaldson** mentioned GSMFC has the approval to hire a part time metadata coordinator to help with data entry and administration. This should help with getting Alabama and Mississippi caught up with data entry. **Bellais** mentioned having the metadata linked to FOSS requires us to get



that information entered and reviewed in a timely fashion. **Donaldson** mentioned we would like to expand metadata to fishing regulations and environmental issues so there should be significant amount of work for this part time employee.

### **Election of Officers**

**P. Campbell** nominated **C. Denson** for chairman and this was seconded by **M. Kasprzak**. **Denson** was approved as the new chairman. **P. Campbell** nominated **V. Swann** as vice-chairman and was seconded by **K. Cuevas**. **Swann** was approved as new vice-chairman.

### **Review of 2008-2009 Commercial Data**

Each state provided feedback based on the review spreadsheets **D. Bellais** sent out prior to the meeting. The States mentioned the FIN DMS numbers were very close their state totals and the slight differences likely indicated they collected some additional data that has yet to be delivered to GSMFC. The States also mentioned there were a few coding errors on their part. 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 1:45 p.m.**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**ARTIFICIAL REEF SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting  
Monday, October 18, 2010  
Clearwater Beach, Florida**

**Joint Session with the Habitat Subcommittee to Discuss the “Best Management Practices for Inshore Artificial Reefs” Document:** (For a complete overview of this joint session please see the minutes from the Habitat Subcommittee’s meeting)

The result of this joint session was the passing of a motion, to turn the document over to the Artificial Reef Subcommittee for their recommendations on how to move it forward or to try and create a new draft document that both subcommittees can agree on. The Artificial Reef Subcommittee agreed to provide the Habitat Subcommittee with their recommendations on the current document or a new draft document before their next meeting. The Subcommittee’s split and the Artificial Reef Subcommittee continued on with their separate meeting, the minutes to which follow.

**Doug Peter** (Chairman) called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. The following members and others were present:

**Members**

Jon Dodrill, FL. FWC, Tallahassee, FL  
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Douglas Peter, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Dale Shively, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Kevin Anson, AL. DCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Madeleine McNamara, U.S.C.G, New Orleans, LA  
Kate Winters, BOEMRE, New Orleans, LA  
Michael Bailey, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL

**Staff**

James Ballard, GSMFC Sport Fish/Aquatic Invasives Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Janet Williams, GSMFC Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Bill Horn, FL. FWC, Tallahassee, FL

**Adoption of Agenda**

**A motion to adopt the agenda as written was made by K. Anson and was passed unanimously.**

**Discussion of Developing a Monitoring Protocol for the Gulf Region:**

**J. Ballard** started the discussion by outlining where this new effort stemmed from. He pointed out that in the wake of the recent oil spill, agencies were asking what is the impact to the artificial reefs in the Gulf and without an established set of base-line data on these reef

structures, it is becoming clear that we cannot answer their questions. James also stated that the ~~lack~~ <sup>lack</sup> of long term consistent data on artificial reefs was brought up as a concern at the 2010 Artificial Reef Summit in Florida. He also affirmed that establishing a base-line data set would help to understand the full role that our reefs are playing in the environment over time and would help to determine the impact to our reef systems from natural or man-made disasters in the future. James also outlined three possible funding sources that the Commission was exploring to support this monitoring effort and stated that they will continue to investigate these and other funding avenues once a proposal outlining this monitoring project is developed and agreed upon by all states. He pointed out that no matter what funding source we go with, we are going to have to develop a list of all ongoing and previously completed monitoring efforts in the states to demonstrate that we are not duplicating an existing effort and that there is a real need for this new program. **J. Dodrill** suggested that we also incorporate artificial reef research activities into this list so that we get a full picture of all the work that is being carried out on artificial reefs whether it is classified as monitoring or not. The group agreed to incorporate research projects into the lists of ongoing and previously completed artificial reef monitoring/assessment projects in their states. **K. Anson** stated that as we move forward with this effort, we should consider ecosystem-based management and we may want to work collaboratively with an ecosystem-based biologist that can provide us with some key points that we may overlook that would be essential for importing the data into important models like index of abundance.

The Subcommittee then had a long discussion on what sampling/monitoring methodologies they would want to utilize to carry out this project. **J. Ballard** pointed out that the methodology they decide on should be the one that gives them the most information in each sampling event and accounts for variables like water visibility while not being so cumbersome that it cannot be carried out easily. Some of the methodologies discussed were hook and line, fish traps, gill nets, side-scan sonar, diver surveys, video monitoring utilizing ROVs or drop cameras, hydroacoustic monitoring coupled with ROVs. The group also talked about the possibility of contracting with universities or companies that have large ROVs with experienced pilots to carry out a portion of the monitoring effort. **D. Peter** pointed out that currently Louisiana contracts out most of their reef monitoring to local universities. Texas and Florida also utilize local universities to do a large portion of their artificial reef monitoring. **K. Anson** stated that Alabama will be constructing a new thirty foot offshore vessel and equipping it with side-scan sonar utilizing Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) funding. This new vessel and equipment will greatly improve the state's monitoring capabilities. Alabama is also working with SEAMAP to sample some of their reefs using vertical ~~line~~ line gear. After a lot of talk about methodologies it became apparent that one set sampling protocol was not going to work across all reef types, water depths and states. The group did however agree that whatever methodologies we decide to go with there should be a video component with some form of sampling like hydroacoustic and some form of capture sampling built into the protocol.

In an attempt to move forward with the development of a Gulf-wide monitoring protocol, **D. Shively** suggested that we back up and first determine the main goals that we hope to get out of this proposed project and the resulting data set. After extensive discussion, the group decided that they would like to be able to track the Biomass, Species Diversity, Water Quality and the physical progression of their reefs utilizing a Video component over time. With these goals in mind each state agreed to draft up a sampling protocol that they would use to reach the desired

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

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MINUTES – 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting  
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**Others**

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**Discussion of Developing a Monitoring Protocol for the Gulf Region:**

**J. Ballard** started the discussion by outlining where this new effort stemmed from. He pointed out that in the wake of the recent oil spill, agencies were asking what is the impact to the artificial reefs in the Gulf and without an established set of base-line data on these reef

structures, it is becoming clear that we cannot answer their questions. James also stated that the lack of long term consistent data on artificial reefs was brought up as a concern at the 2010 Artificial Reef Summit in Florida. He also affirmed that establishing a base-line data set would help to understand the full role that our reefs are playing in the environment over time and would help to determine the impact to our reef systems from natural or man-made disasters in the future. James also outlined three possible funding sources that the Commission was exploring to support this monitoring effort and stated that they will continue to investigate these and other funding avenues once a proposal outlining this monitoring project is developed and agreed upon by all states. He pointed out that no matter what funding source we go with, we are going to have to develop a list of all ongoing and previously completed monitoring efforts in the states to demonstrate that we are not duplicating an existing effort and that there is a real need for this new program. **J. Dodrill** suggested that we also incorporate artificial reef research activities into this list so that we get a full picture of all the work that is being carried out on artificial reefs whether it is classified as monitoring or not. The group agreed to incorporate research projects into the lists of ongoing and previously completed artificial reef monitoring/assessment projects in their states. **K. Anson** stated that as we move forward with this effort, we should consider ecosystem-based management and we may want to work collaboratively with an ecosystem-based biologist that can provide us with some key points that we may overlook that would be essential for importing the data into important models like index of abundance.

The Subcommittee then had a long discussion on what sampling/monitoring methodologies they would want to utilize to carry out this project. **J. Ballard** pointed out that the methodology they decide on should be the one that gives them the most information in each sampling event and accounts for variables like water visibility while not being so cumbersome that it cannot be carried out easily. Some of the methodologies discussed were hook and line, fish traps, gill nets, side-scan sonar, diver surveys, video monitoring utilizing ROVs or drop cameras, hydroacoustic monitoring coupled with ROVs. The group also talked about the possibility of contracting with universities or companies that have large ROVs with experienced pilots to carry out a portion of the monitoring effort. **D. Peter** pointed out that currently Louisiana contracts out most of their reef monitoring to local universities. Texas and Florida also utilize local universities to do a large portion of their artificial reef monitoring. **K. Anson** stated that Alabama will be constructing a new thirty foot offshore vessel and equipping it with side-scan sonar utilizing Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) funding. This new vessel and equipment will greatly improve the state's monitoring capabilities. Alabama is also working with SEAMAP to sample some of their reefs using vertical line gear. After a lot of talk about methodologies it became apparent that one set sampling protocol was not going to work across all reef types, water depths and states. The group did however agree that whatever methodologies we decide to go with there should be a video component with some form of sampling like hydroacoustic and some form of capture sampling built into the protocol.

In an attempt to move forward with the development of a Gulf-wide monitoring protocol, **D. Shively** suggested that we back up and first determine the main goals that we hope to get out of this proposed project and the resulting data set. After extensive discussion, the group decided that they would like to be able to track the Biomass, Species Diversity, Water Quality and the physical progression of their reefs utilizing a Video component over time. With these goals in mind each state agreed to draft up a sampling protocol that they would use to reach the desired

goals on a representative sample of their entire reef system, sampling on a quarterly basis, given the assets at their disposal. The subcommittee will review these five documents and look for ways to standardize them as much as possible at their next meeting which will be sometime in the spring of 2011. Along with these state sampling protocols, each state agreed to put together a list of completed/ongoing artificial reef monitoring projects and research.

#### **Update on the Lionfish Invasion:**

**J. Ballard** updated the Subcommittee on the continuing problem with Lionfish (*Pterois volitans*) along the east coast and throughout the Caribbean and in the last year in the Gulf of Mexico. The lionfish is native to the waters of the Indo-Pacific and was first reported in Atlantic waters in 1992. Through the rest of the 1990s they continued to spread along the east coast and out to Bermuda. In 2004 they were first reported in waters of the Bahamas and over the next five years they continued to invade reefs throughout the Caribbean. In December 2009 the first lionfish in Gulf of Mexico waters was captured north of the Yucatan and in 2010 they have continued their spread and in just the last month there have been eight lionfish sightings in the northern Gulf of Mexico. **J. Ballard** explained that one of the main things driving the lionfish's rapid takeover of this invaded range is their very prolific and successful reproduction. Reproductively mature females can produce upwards of 25,000 eggs per spawn and they can spawn every 3.5-4 days during peak seasons and with a protracted spawning season they can potentially reproduce year round in portions of the invaded range. James showed some graphs depicting the rapid increase in abundance of lionfish on reefs in the Bahamas from 2004-2008 and in some areas they are reaching densities up to eight times higher than in their native range and are becoming the most abundant species of their size on the reefs. James explained that in this invaded range, lionfish are opportunistic predators and they have been shown to consume 56 species of fish and a variety of invertebrates. James also covered some of the outreach efforts being carried out by USGS and NOAA as well as the fishing derbies that are being held in the Florida Keys to remove lionfish by spear fishing. He also went over the "Eat Lionfish Campaign" that was recently launched in Florida to try and get people interested in consuming lionfish. Part of this new campaign will be working with restaurant chefs to get lionfish added to their menus.

#### **Overview of State/Federal Artificial Reef Activities:**

**Florida:** **J. Dodrill** provided the Subcommittee with the state artificial reef report for the state of Florida. He started by talking about Florida's involvement with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The April 20, 2010 explosion, fire, collapse and subsequent sinking on April 22<sup>nd</sup> of Transocean's MS 252 Deepwater Horizon drilling platform leased by British Petroleum resulted in diversion of resources away from artificial reef construction and monitoring work in the Gulf of Mexico in the summer of 2010. Before the well was capped on July 15, The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) had deployed over 200 personnel, three aircraft, 40 vessels to NW Florida as well as incident command centers in Tallahassee, Miami, New Orleans, and Mobile. Artificial reef staff rotated through shifts at the State of Florida Emergency Operations Center in Tallahassee, participated in working groups related to development of seafood sampling and analysis protocol for the protection of human health to ultimately enable

areas closed to fishing off Florida and elsewhere to be subsequently re-opened. Artificial reef staff also participated in regular conference calls with concerned stakeholders, and flew aircraft surveillance as spotters mapping oil spill product along the Florida Panhandle. Coordination of Natural Resources Damage Assessment Activities as well as ongoing beach cleanup activities in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties continue to involve Florida Wildlife Research Institute Personnel.

The primary artificial construction reef project scheduled off the Florida Gulf Coast for the summer of 2010 was the deployment of 2000 concrete 89 cm square hollow cubes in 450 units of four, randomly placed and separated from their nearest neighbor by 200 or more meters within a large 120 sq. km area (Steinhatchee Fisheries Management Area) off the Florida Big Bend in 39-50 ft of water. The project is the Phase II construction effort of a larger project in partnership with the University of Florida (Dr. William Lindberg, principle investigator) to see if placement of this number of reefs seaward of important gag grouper sea grass habitat but in an area where well developed hard bottom is sparse, would increase survivorship and fitness of young of the year gag moving seaward from their sea grass nursery areas. Seaward of the planned Phase II module deployment is a system of four cube "sentinel" or evaluation reefs that were placed as part of Phase I of the project to collect baseline information of gag grouper numbers and usage. Changes in sizes and numbers of grouper on these evaluation reefs in response to construction of higher quality reef in the form of the 450 patch reefs will be monitored. The widely spaced evaluation reefs for the past four years have also served as fishery independent monitoring sites for gag grouper assessment.

The primary contractor hired to build the reef modules and implement the construction of Phase II of the Steinhatchee Fisheries Management Area project was hired by British Petroleum to transport and recover oil booms in Alabama. With that effort completed the Contractor is back manufacturing cube modules. Commencement of module deployment is expected this fall. Assessment dives were done on artificial reefs in the 35-114 ft. depth range by FWC, Escambia County, and Okaloosa County. Hired dive support personnel noted no outward signs of damage to reef communities in the Western Florida Panhandle. On two shallow water (35-50 ft) dives Escambia County did note traces of suspended petroleum product (pea-size globule and a pink stream of product). A deeper water technical dive conducted on and around the base of the Oriskany by Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute personnel noted no visual signs of oil caught on that vessel.

Jon also talked about an artificial reef project off Mexico Beach Bay County that was completed on September 28. This project was a \$30,000 match project to an upcoming 2010-2011 USFWS artificial reef construction project with the City of Mexico. This has been the only Florida Gulf Coast artificial reef construction activity involving FWC undertaken this summer. Three different types of modules were deployed, all provided by Walter Marine of Alabama. Additionally three reefs with plaques were deployed as family-funded memorials to loved ones. All FWC and non-FWC funded artificial reef projects are required to submit Material Placement Reports to the FWC Artificial Reef Program office within 30 days of materials deployment.

Also scheduled on the Florida Gulf Coast under the current USFWS Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Grant (2010-2011), in addition to completing Phase II of the Steinhatchee

Fisheries Management Area Project, and completing the City of Mexico Beach's project (\$81,750) will be artificial reef projects with Citrus County (\$120,000), Okaloosa County (\$48,400) and Pinellas County (\$50,000). Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Funds will be utilized for these projects with the Counties providing additional match dollars to the projects.

Jon provided the following list of artificial reefs, constructed statewide by local coastal governments in 2010, to the Subcommittee.



COUNTY	DEPLOY DATE	REEF NAME	MATERIAL 1	TONS	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	DEPTH	RELIEF
DADE	9/8/2010	M/V SHARK	82' STEEL TUG	UK	25°54.476' N	80°04.587' W	255	21
DADE	8/6/2010	2010 SCHOOL STEPS	CONCRETE STEPS AND RAMPS (85)	90.0	25°48.891' N	80°10.146' W	24	8
DADE	6/25/2010	EAGLE SCOUT REEF #2	MODULES CONCRETE REEFBALLS (7)	UK	25°54.374' N	80°08.011' W	14	2
DADE	6/8/2010	MERCY AR 2010-ROCK	ROCK LIMESTONE BOULDERS (1620 TONS)	1620.0	25°44.330' N	80°12.531' W	13	7
DADE	6/3/2010	MERCY AR 2010-CULVERTS	CONCRETE RUBBLE (34 PIECES)	UK	25°44.290' N	80°12.606' W	13	7
ESCAMBIA	5/9/2010	NAVARRE PIER REEF #1	CONCRETE DECK SPANS, PILINGS & CAPS (59)	815.75	30°18.000' N	87°12.600' W	45	6
PALM BEACH	9/11/2010	JUPITER INLET SITE	LIMESTONE BOULDERS (~550 TONS)	550	26°57.900' N	80°03.910' W	34	10
PALM BEACH	9/11/2010	JUPITER INLET SITE	CONCRETE PIECES (10)	100.00	26°57.900' N	80°03.730' W	37	3
ST JOHNS	8/15/2010	ANDY KING REEF #1 & #2	CONCRETE PILINGS (263)	1146.0	29°52.591' N	81°09.207' W	65	8
VOLUSIA	8/3/2010	SITE 12SW	CONCRETE CULVERTS & STRUCTURES (246)	331.00	29°11.690' N	80°46.685' W	74	18
VOLUSIA	8/1/2010	SITE 10NW	CONCRETE CULVERTS & STRUCTURES (240)	449.00	29°21.638' N	80°49.966' W	65	14
VOLUSIA	7/30/2010	SITE 13NE	CONCRETE CULVERTS & STRUCTURES (169)	477.50	29°10.362' N	80°41.264' W	85	18
VOLUSIA	7/28/2010	SITE 1SOUTH	CONCRETE CULVERTS & PIECES (195)	486.00	29°06.996' N	80°41.681' W	74	17
VOLUSIA	7/26/2010	SITE 6SE	CONCRETE CULVERTS & PIECES (167)	459.00	29°02.866' N	80°43.175' W	71	11
VOLUSIA	7/20/2010	SITE 7SOUTH	CONCRETE PIECES (110)	450.00	29°01.012' N	80°41.019' W	60	13

Lionfish on Artificial Reefs in the Gulf of Mexico

On September 9, while monitoring some Escambia County Reefs off NW FL south of Pensacola Pass, FWC and Escambia County staff found a lionfish on a reef ball in 90 feet of Water. On October 1, 2010 a second lionfish was observed off Escambia County inside a hollow ~~Water~~<sup>walter</sup> Limestone Tetrahedron unit at a depth of 95 feet. Both specimens were removed from the system, with tissue samples sent to James Morris, a NOAA ecologist at the NOAA Fisheries Lab in Beaufort, NC. Photos were taken of both specimens and sightings were also reported to Pam Schofield of the US Geological Survey.

Oriskany PCB Sampling

April 27, 2010. 15 legal-sized red snapper, 13 legal-sized vermilion snapper, three red porgy and four whitebone porgy were caught on hook and line under a NMFS letter of authorization and shipped frozen to Texas A&M for individual analysis of skin on fillets of 209 PCB congeners. Results were provided on 10/13/10. A table showing total PCB concentrations in picograms/gram wet weight (p/g) (parts per trillion) is shown below. The individual total PCB concentrations for the 13 Vermilion snapper were all below the USEPA Tier 1 screening level of 20,000 p/g and the Florida Department of Health (DOH) screening levels of 50,000 p/g. While the mean values of the 15 red snapper were also below the mean USEPA and DOH screening levels, two of the 15 red snapper had total PCB congener levels that exceeded the DOH levels (73,591.4 and 72,319 p/g). The combined mean for the porgies (7 specimens) was 46,285.1, just below the DOH screening level but above the USEPA screening level. Six of seven porgies exceeded the USEPA screening levels. The highest PCB reading of any of the 35 fish was recorded for a 384 mm TL Whitebone Porgy (95,374.2 p/g). The next (8<sup>th</sup>) sampling evolution is scheduled to take place in mid-November 2010 which will have constituted about 4.5 years of sampling on the Oriskany which was sunk in May 2006, with the first PCB sampling occurring in Dec. 2006. While mean concentrations in Red Snapper have fallen, and Vermilion Snapper values have always been consistently low, porgies seem to have higher PCB concentrations. Prior to the April 27 sampling, no Whitebone Porgies had been previously sampled at the Oriskany, though prior red porgy PCB concentrations had been elevated.

April 27, 2010 Oriskany sampling total PCB results (picograms/gram wet weight) for legal-sized Red and Vermilion Snappers and Red and Whitebone Porgies (35 fish total).

ID No.	Species	Total Length (mm)	Total PCBs (p/g)	
OR-RS-191	Red Snapper	431	1,428.2	
OR-RS-192	Red Snapper	614	7,207.3	
OR-RS-194	Red Snapper	466	2,565.6	
OR-RS-195	Red Snapper	698	<b>73,591.4</b> **	largest red snapper of sample
OR-RS-196	Red Snapper	419	1,206.3	
OR-RS-197	Red Snapper	441	3,180.4	
OR-RS-198	Red Snapper	449	<b>72,319.0</b> **	
OR-RS-199	Red Snapper	491	3,345.0	
OR-RS-200	Red Snapper	584	3,321.0	
OR-RS-201-	Red Snapper	494	2,372.8	
OR-RS-202	Red Snapper	475	2,912.0	
OR-RS-203	Red Snapper	452	2,826.7	
OR-RS-204	Red Snapper	515	2,736.4	

OR-RS-205	Red Snapper	496	13,727.8
OR-RS-206	Red Snapper	531	10,958.5
<b>RED SNAPPER (15) MEAN:</b>			<b><u>13,579.9</u></b>
OR-VS-182	Vermilion Snapper	424	1,547.2
OR-VS-183	Vermilion Snapper	432	5,336.8
OR-VS-184	Vermilion Snapper	465	2,088.6
OR-VS-185	Vermilion Snapper	429	2,038.2
OR-VS-186	Vermilion Snapper	470	6,562.8
OR-VS-187	Vermilion Snapper	434	3,898.4
OR-VS-188	Vermilion Snapper	422	5,075.8
OR-VS-189	Vermilion Snapper	417	607.1

**April 27, 2010 Oriskany PCB sampling results (con't)**

ID NO.	SPECIES		TOTAL LENGTH (mm)	TOTAL PCB'S (p/g)
OR-VS-190	Vermilion Snapper	460	2,612.9	
OR-VS-207	Vermilion Snapper	425	1,805.8	
OR-VS-208	Vermilion Snapper	423	5,515.1	
OR-VS-209	Vermilion Snapper	339	2,574.9	
OR-VS-210	Vermilion Snapper	395	10,553.1	
<b>VERMILION SNAPPER (13) MEAN:</b>			<b><u>3,862.8 p/g</u></b>	
OR-RP-193	Red Porgy	335	<b>36,833.1*</b>	
OR-RP-211	Red Porgy	341	10,642.4	
OR-RP-212	Red Porgy	323	<b>31,098.1*</b>	
OR-WP-213	Whitebone Porgy	375	<b>22,986.2*</b>	
OR-WP-214	Whitebone Porgy	365	<b>58,405.2**</b>	
OR-WP-215	Whitebone Porgy	370	<b>68,656.8**</b>	
OR-WP-216	Whitebone Porgy	384	<b>95,374.2**</b>	
<b>PORGIES (COMBINED-7) MEAN:</b>			<b><u>46,285.1*p/g</u></b>	

\*\*Value exceeds Florida Dept. of Health Screening level of 50,000 p/g

\*Value exceeds USEPA Tier 1 monitoring screening level of 20,000 p/g

Summary: Mean total PCB congener values of both 1 Red Snapper (15) and Vermilion Snapper (13) were below both the USEPA screening levels and U.S. Department of Health screening levels. Two of 28 snappers, both Red Snappers, exceeded both the USEPA and FDOH screening levels.

This was the first of seven sampling evolutions on the Oriskany where whitebone porgy were caught. Since they are retained as a food fish, they along with red porgy, previously sampled, were retained for analysis. Six of seven porgies exceeded USEPA screening levels. All four whitebone porgy exceeded USEPA screening levels and three of four whitebone porgy exceeded FDOH screening levels.

Artificial Reef Program Partnerships with Florida Sea Grant

FWC Artificial Reef Program staff member Keith Mille gave a presentation in support of a four year national review of Florida Sea Grants program focusing on the partnership support that the state reef program had received from the Sea Grant Program. See presentation below with associated notes.

## Florida Artificial Reef Development



### Why is Florida Sea Grant involved?

- Development of Florida artificial reef programs
- State & local reef programs seek technical assistance
- Research on ecological function & fisheries mgt.

Bob Swett noted earlier the substantial increases in human population and boating traffic along Florida's coasts. And Steve Otwell noted the change in fisheries policies from developing underutilized species in the 1980s to sustainability and now fisheries conservation. The artificial reef program has evolved accordingly as one of the original Florida Sea Grant Extension programs, pre-dating the State's artificial reef program by more than a decade. The FSG focus spans local, state and regional stakeholders and beyond,

## Local to International Engagement

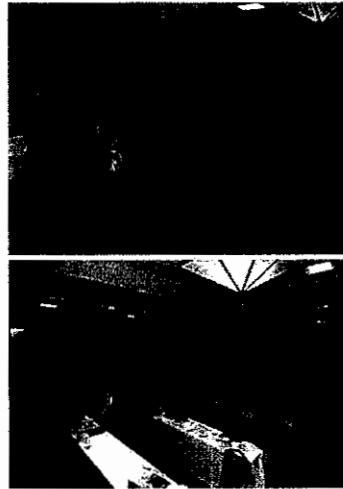
### Regional Workshops

- Held annually
- Brings program coordinators, scientists, and resource managers together.
- Highly successful as brings people together with common problems and opportunities.

John Stevely (FSGE Agent for 3 counties) has organized annual workshops that serve as a forum for county artificial reef coordinators from all the peninsular Florida West Coast and beyond. And this regional workshop approach was duplicated in the Florida Panhandle in 2006, with a 2-day workshop focused on large area artificial reef sites.

## 2010 Florida Artificial Reef Summit

- Close collaboration with FWC
- Over 180 participants: citizen groups, county programs, state & federal agencies, other states' reef programs, international attendees
- 20 sponsors donated \$22,000 to help defray Summit costs ... strong evidence of stakeholder support and engagement



The Florida Artificial Reef Summits were initiated by Florida Sea Grant in the mid-1980s and they have continued every 4-6 years since then, led by the State's Artificial Reef Program once it was established. The 2004 Summit emphasized implementation of the Florida Artificial Reef Strategic Plan adopted by FWC in December 2003, with the Florida Sea Grant Extension Specialist serving on the responsible Advisory Board with a broad group of stakeholder opinion leaders. The 2010 Summit was organized by FSGE and FWC with county representation on the Steering Committee and emphasized the theme of artificial reefs in fisheries management.

## International Coverage



- Dr. Lindberg Keynote Speaker
- FSG poster on economics

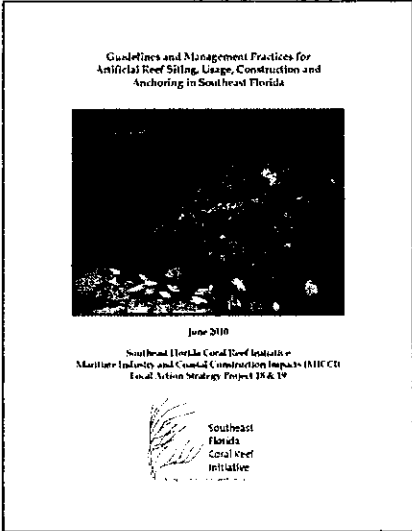


Florida Sea Grant expertise in artificial reefs was shared internationally in 2009 (as has been the case for many years); our Extension Specialist and reef researcher gave the opening keynote address at the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference on Artificial Reefs and Related Aquatic Habitats in Curitiba,

Brazil. FSGE faculty also collaborated to present a poster on the economics of artificial reefs in Florida.

### Handbook for County Artificial Reef Programs and Resource Managers

- 12 chapters, 147 pages
- 15 contributors from 8 state, federal or local agencies & FSG
- NOAA & FDEP funded
- Drs. Lindberg & Seaman, editors and contributors
- Applicable beyond southeast Florida



Guidelines and Management Practices for  
Artificial Reef Siting, Usage, Construction and  
Anchoring in Southeast Florida

June 2010  
Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative  
Maritime Industry and Coastal Construction Impacts (MICCI)  
Local Action Strategy Project 10 & 10

Southeast  
Florida  
Coral Reef  
Initiative

A 3-year effort by local, state and federal stakeholders culminated in 2010 with the publication of a guidelines handbook for local reef programs. This was funded by NOAA through the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative and appropriately emphasizes artificial reef practices in coral reef ecosystems. However, the utility extends to all of Florida and the document has been submitted to the Pell Library and EDIS for more general distribution.

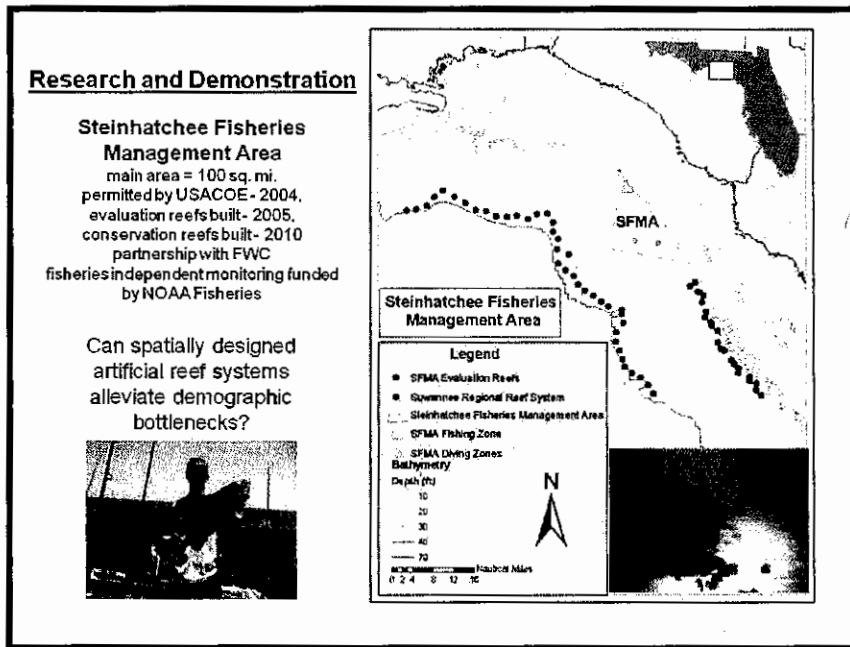
### Economic Benefits Research

- **"The Economic Benefits Associated with Florida's Artificial Reefs"** (Adams, Lindberg, Stevely) - EDIS #FE649

*... studies have shown artificial reefs generate positive economic benefits to the local / statewide economies*

- Recent Economic Impact assessment of Artificial Reefs in a 6-county region of southwest Florida (funded through FWC and WCIND) ... for 2009 ...

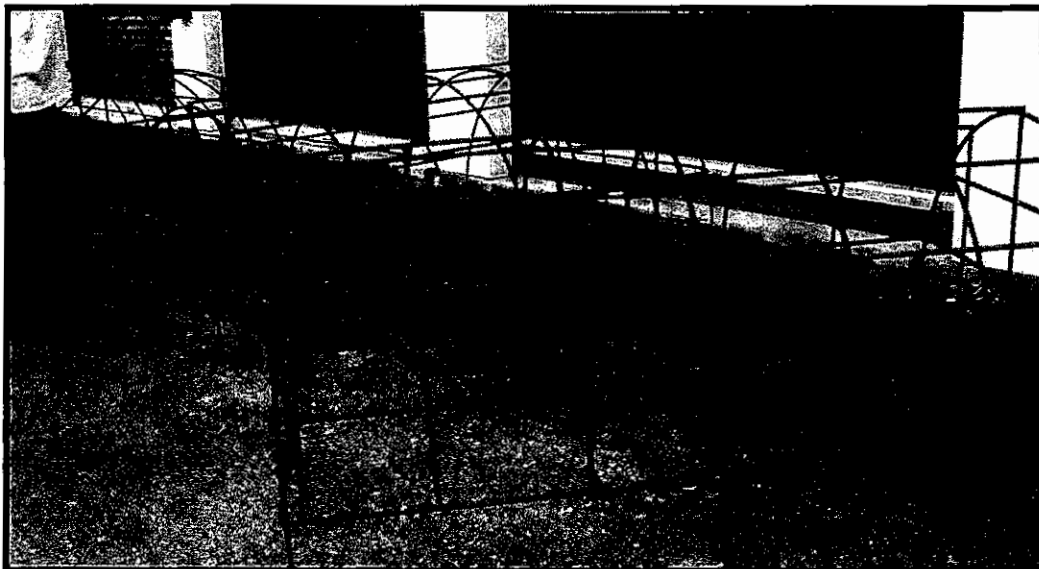
Total Artificial Reef-related Expenditures - \$274 M.  
Economic Impact - \$182 M ( 50% private boaters / 50% for hire)  
Incomes - \$85 M  
Employment-- 2,000



The cutting edge of artificial reef technology is being applied to fisheries management in the Steinhatchee Fisheries Management Area, which is a partnership between FWC and UF led by the FSGE Extension Specialist and reef researcher. UF is the permit holder for the 100 sq mi SFMA and FWC is investing \$750K in total SFMA reef infrastructure. This is in addition to the ~\$500K invested during the early 1990s in the Suwannee Regional Reef System (red) to the south, where experimental results warranted the scaling up of the SFMA. The objective is fisheries conservation, manipulating habitat quality and accessibility for juvenile gag to alleviate density-dependent constraints on growth, which affects natural mortality and subsequent reproductive potential. The main body of conservation reefs are under contract to be built this fall. And NOAA Fisheries is continuing to fund the associated fisheries independent monitoring through the MARFIN Program.

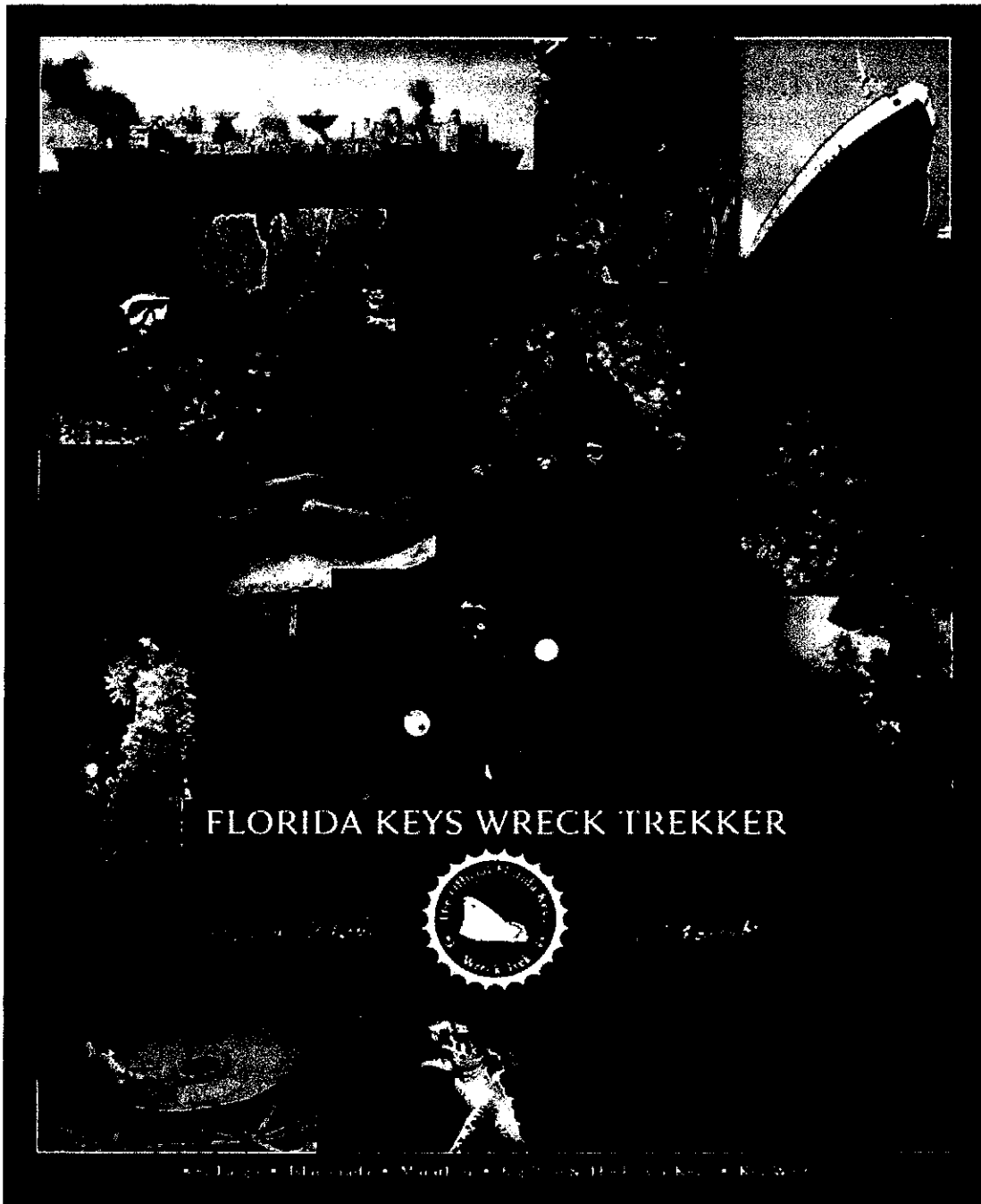
Biorock Project SE Florida

A series of rebar frames proposed to be cemented into the limestone substrate off Broward County (SE FL), supplied with electricity to enhance coral reef growth is on hold due to



concerns about collecting and transplanting coral to these structures as part of the project. The County has issued a conditional permit which requires detailed monitoring. The City of Fort Lauderdale, the permit holder, is balking at the expense of monitoring.

Florida Keys and Tourist Development Council Sponsors Florida Keys Wreck Trekker Program



The Florida Keys Dive Shops and Tourist Development Council put forth a marketing strategy of encouraging visitors to complete a series of dives on designated vessels in the Florida Keys whereupon they would get a certificate and award.



**Alabama:** K. Anson provided the Subcommittee with the following overview of the artificial reef activities in Alabama.

In May 2010, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources/Marine Resources Division (ADCNR/MRD) suspended inshore reef construction activities due to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Two new areas permitted through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers were to be marked with pilings and materials were to be deployed. Since the threat of oil has been removed these reefs will be constructed in Nov/Dec 2010.

ADCNR/MRD suspended all offshore reef construction activities including permitting reefs for private individuals during the Deepwater Horizon event. This action was taken to limit vessel traffic during oil recovery efforts. Artificial reef permits issued by ADCNR/MRD staff were available mid-September 2010.

ADCNR/MRD has applied for permission from the USACE to create two near-shore artificial reef zones within State waters near Orange Beach. These zones, each approximately 1.0 mi<sup>2</sup>, are in waters ranging from 34 feet to 44 feet deep. Preliminary approval has been received from the USACE pending approval from the Alabama Historical Commission. The Commission requires a side-scan and magnetometer survey of the proposed areas to determine if any artifacts of historical significance are present. ADCNR/MRD is in the process of developing the specifications for such surveys and anticipates a contractor will start the work by early 2011.

ADCNR/MRD has received inquiries from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement regarding the need to establish better lines of communication and data exchange between the two agencies in order to understand the extent of underwater gas pipelines within the offshore artificial reef zones. No specific timetable has been discussed to address this need.

ADCNR/MRD has received interest from local for-hire captains about the possibilities of deploying mid-water Fish Attracting Devices (FAD's) on a pilot scale. FAD's would be deployed in the offshore reef zones in depths up to 400'. ADCNR/MRD staff have contacted staff from Hawaii to collect information on the equipment and deployment needs, longevity, costs and maintenance issues related to FAD's used in its program. To date no determination has been made to proceed with this program.

ADCNR/MRD has received approval to construct a 30 foot aluminum vessel and purchase side-scan equipment. This will allow ADCNR/MRD the capability to map both inshore and offshore reef zones in order to inventory reef habitat and identify areas which could be enhanced. In addition, the vessel will serve as a platform to support diving activities to assess and survey reefs.

**Mississippi:** K. Cuevas updated the group on the activities undertaken by the Mississippi artificial reef program. He pointed out that the program was greatly impacted by the recent oil spill; however, they were able to make some new deployments and continue some ongoing monitoring projects.

From July 2009 through the present, the Mississippi's Department of Marine Resources had 41 deployments. There were 16 deployments of concrete culverts (3,200 tons = approximately 1,600 individual culverts), 2 deployments of Reef Balls (230 individual Reef Balls), 17 deployments of Bay Balls (550 individual Bay Balls), 1 deployment of LARKS (3 individual LARKS), and 5 deployments of steel hull vessels (vessels ranging from 65'-178' in length).

Reef monitoring continues each month on both offshore and inshore reefs. We are continuing with our juvenile Red Snapper tagging project using fish traps on Fish Haven's 1 & 2. For our inshore reef study, we are utilizing a 750' 5 panel gill net on 1 reef in each of the 3 coastal counties (Hancock, Harrison, & Jackson).

**Louisiana: D. Peter** gave the state report for Louisiana. He stated that the oil spill slowed down their program's progress as well: although, their offshore group has been able to make up some of these losses. They have continued to assess and permit reef deployments related to oil and gas structures. The Program continues to be very active in accepting new structures into permitted artificial reef sites. Their offshore program is made up of 64 established reefs and they have accepted 259 oil and gas structures since the inception. In 2010 they were able to deploy 19 of these structures and have an additional 72 permitted for deployment that they will reef over the next three years.

The program has developed several inshore reefs. The state's inshore reef program is made up of 27 established reefs. Some of the key activities of the inshore program for this reporting period include, creation of the Bird Island II reef with 3200 cubic yards of crushed limestone, enhancement of the Point Mast Reef with 3300 cubic yards of crushed limestone, creation of the South Twin Span Reef from 60 recycled I-10 bridge spans, and permitting of a 50 acre area in Barataria Bay for the development of a reef. They are also in the process of permitting another reef site in Lake Pontchartrain.

Doug also pointed out that the state will be keeping two ~1500' long sections of the Twin Span Bridge standing as fishing piers and their program has been assigned the responsibility of developing artificial reefs around the piers.

**Texas: D. Shively** updated the Subcommittee on Texas' artificial reef activities.

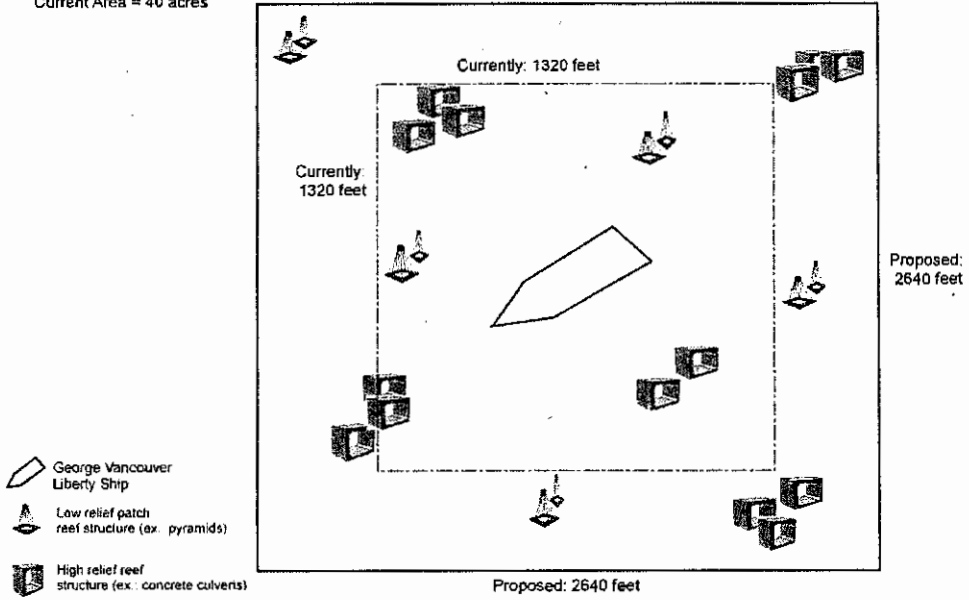
The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) reef program continued processing a number of Rigs-to-Reefs projects. Nine rigs were reefed, generating \$1.5 million in donations. Another 15 active projects are underway and are in various stages of completion. Three additional reef sites were permitted in the General Permit area of the High Island block, making a total of 61 reef sites in Texas (ranging in size from 40ac to over 300ac).

TPWD continues to wait on a US Army Corps of Engineers permit to expand the Vancouver Liberty Ship Reef, off Freeport, from 40 acres to 160 acres. Over 2,000 tons of concrete was reefed at this site in August, with assistance from the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA). The CCA had stock-piled numerous concrete culverts for reefing on this site.

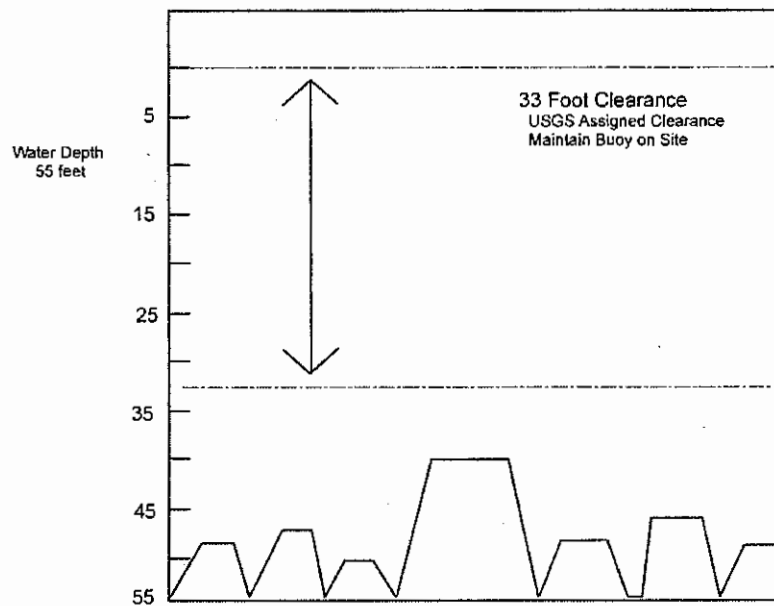
## Proposed Expansion of Vancouver Artificial Reef Site (BA-336)

### Detail of Artificial Reef Materials

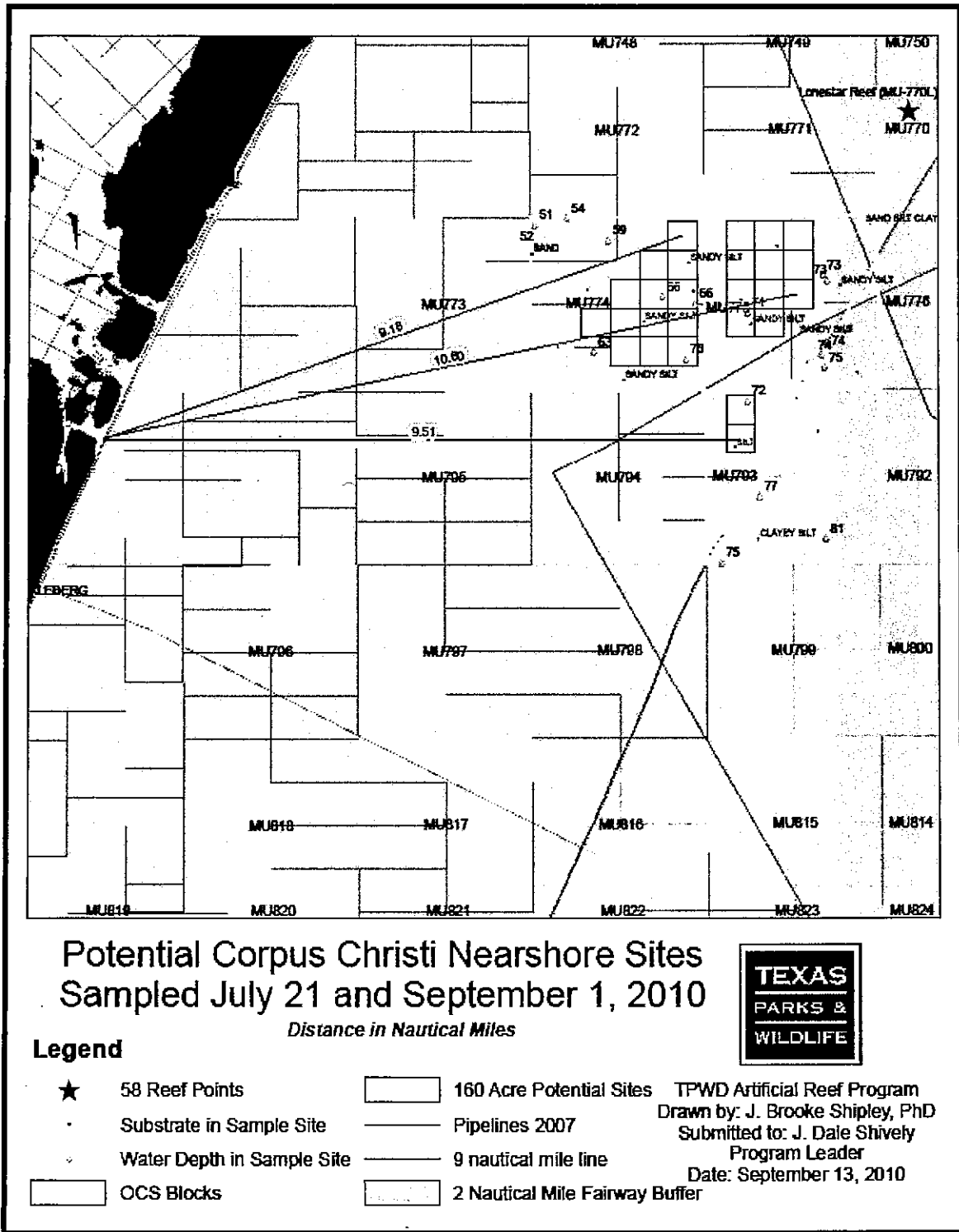
Proposed Area = 160 acres  
Current Area = 40 acres



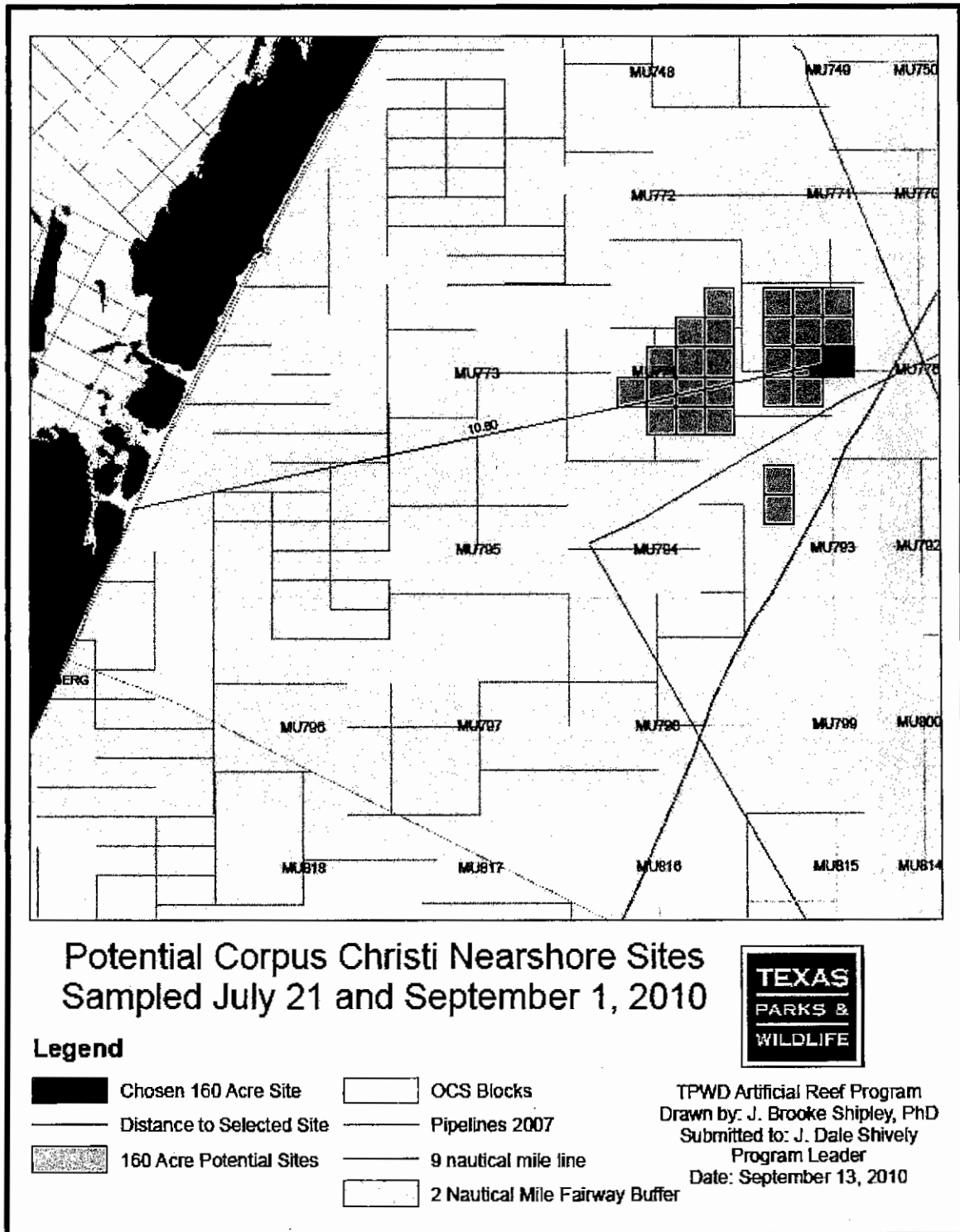
### Detail of Profile of Artificial Reef Materials



TPWD continues to work with the City of Corpus Christi and SEA (Saltwater Fishing Enhancement Association) to locate and permit a 160ac nearshore reef site in Texas state waters off Corpus Christi. Potential site recommendations were presented to the City Council this fall. Following the recommendations, four bottom surveys were conducted using scuba divers with underwater scooters. The divers traveled for five minutes, stopped and sampled the bottom.



By using this method they were able to cover a distance of 0.2-0.7 nautical miles on each survey dive. From these surveys and the physical characteristics of the sites, it was determined that the best site for the new reef was the bottom left grid of OCS block MU-775.



Dale pointed out that Alamo Concrete, in Harlingen, will move another 1,000+ concrete culverts to their reef material storage site at the Port Mansfield for future reefing at the Port Mansfield nearshore reef site (7nm offshore) by summer 2011. The total culverts at the site will be over 3,000.

No biological monitoring trips were made during this time period after the reef program's dive boat moved its operations to Louisiana to work for BP during the oil cleanup efforts. However, the University of Texas at Brownsville has continued its second year of monitoring of the Texas Clipper. Out of a scheduled 30 dives, they were only able to make 12 because of bad weather. One of the parameters they are monitoring is the increase in fish species over time and they have documented a steady increase since the ship was sunk 2 years ago. Last year they had observed a total of 37 fish species and this year, at 22 months post sinking, they have observed a total of 56 species. They are also conducting a study looking at the economic impact of the ship. For this study they are observing the impact on the local economy from both angler and diver trips on the reef. Preliminary findings are showing a strong positive impact on the economy because of the Texas Clipper.

Dale also stated that a Google Earth interactive map is under construction for the Reef Program's webpage and should be ready for testing by late October. This map, along with plans for a new website, display, brochures, and outreach events are part of a public relations campaign to promote artificial reefs in Texas.

**NOAA:** M. Bailey mentioned that Russell Dunn is the new Recreational Policy Advisor to Eric Schwaab, the new Assistant Administrator for Fisheries. The former Chief of Partnerships and Communication, Christopher Moore accepted the position as the new Executive Director of the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council. Michael also stated that there is an ongoing effort inside NOAA to reorganize how education, outreach and communication activities take place; however, it is still too early in the process to see how it is going to play out.

**With no further business to discuss; D. Peter adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.**

11



APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TCC HABITAT SUBCOMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 61<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Meeting  
Monday, October 18, 2010  
Clearwater, Florida**

**Chairman Ron Mezich** called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.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  
Cherie O'Brien, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Heather Warner-Finley, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
John Mareska, ADCNR MRD, Dauphin Island, AL  
Jeff Clark, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
David Dale, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL

**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

**Others**

Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Douglas Peter, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Dale Shively, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Camp Matens, Baton Rouge, LA  
Mark Schexnayder, LDWF, New Orleans, LA  
Kate Winters, Bureau of Ocean, Energy, and Management, New Orleans  
Michael Bailey, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL  
Bill Horn, FWC, Tallahassee, FL  
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Madeleine McNamara, USCG, New Orleans, LA  
Troy Baker, NOAA, Baton Rouge, LA  
David Palandro, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL  
Jon Dodrill, FWC, Tallahassee, FL  
Kevin Anson, ADCNR MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Joe Gill, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Ocean Springs, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

**The agenda was adopted as written.**



## Approval of Minutes

The minutes from October 12, 2009 were approved as written.

## Review of the Commission's Best Management Practices for Inshore Artificial Reefs

For this agenda item, the Habitat Subcommittee met jointly with the Artificial Reef Subcommittee to discuss the Commission's draft Best Management Practices (BMP) for inshore artificial reefs. **J. Rester** stated that the Habitat Subcommittee had originally started work on the BMPs in March 2009. The impetus for this action was that several states were seeing a number of applications for inshore artificial reefs without clearly defined goals or objectives. The Artificial Reef Subcommittee reviewed and provided input on the BMPs that the Habitat Subcommittee finalized in October 2009. The BMPs then went to the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) for their review in March 2010. The TCC felt that the BMPs needed additional review and instructed the Habitat and Artificial Reef Subcommittees to meet jointly to revise the BMPs. **J. Rester** stated that he would now like to review the document to see if there are edits that can be made to improve the document.

**K. Anson** stated that he was concerned about the tone of the document. He felt there were too many uses of the word should. He felt that the current language in the document was too restrictive. He also felt that the document contained too much detail that would be addressed by other permitting agencies such as the Army Corps. **J. Ballard** stated that he heard that the numbers in the document were the largest issue and many TCC members questioned how the numbers were derived. **H. Finley** stated that in Louisiana they were interested in the ecological role that inshore artificial reefs play in inshore waters. Since most of these projects do not require monitoring, they were questions regarding these artificial reefs and she thought the BMPs would help address some of those questions. **D. Shively** stated that he felt the BMPs should have come from the Artificial Reef Subcommittee first and then to the Habitat Subcommittee. He felt that the BMPs document was not needed. **J. Rester** stated that he felt the document could be useful, but maybe not in its current form. He asked the participants whether they wanted to proceed and review the current BMPs, start over again with something new, or forget about the document entirely. **H. Finley** made a **motion to return the draft BMP document to the Artificial Reef Subcommittee to provide direction on the draft document and ask the Artificial Reef Subcommittee on guidance on artificial reef monitoring.** **J. Clark** seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. After passage of the motion, the Artificial Reef Subcommittee left the meeting to continue their meeting separately.

## Administrative Report

**J. Rester** stated that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has reviewed the 2005 EFH Amendment as part of the required 5-year EFH review process defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Based on this report, the Council and NMFS will determine the need to revise the EFH designations and descriptions. The 5-Year EFH Review Report includes sections reviewing existing EFH descriptions and designations by life stage for errors; evaluating new information available since the 2005 EFH Amendment for EFH descriptions and designations; determining possible new methods of designating EFH; evaluating how species specific EFH identifications and descriptions can be better presented in addition to the FMP description; making recommendations on whether

EFH descriptions should be updated; reviewing any changes and new information on fishing impacts that may adversely affect EFH; reviewing any changes and new information on non-fishing impacts that may adversely affect EFH; reviewing habitat areas of particular concern (HAPC) designations; determining if current HAPC designations are adequate or if areas need to be removed or added. The 5-Year EFH Review Report will be submitted to the NMFS before the end of the year.

**J. Rester** stated that he attended the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Gulf of Mexico Program sponsored freshwater inflow conference in February 2010. Speakers discussed the value of freshwater inflows, threats to freshwater inflows, data and monitoring needs, freshwater inflow recommendations, new modeling techniques, along with approaches taken by several states around the country.

### **National Resource Damage Assessment for the BP Deepwater Horizon Incident**

**T. Baker** stated that the National Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process includes a preliminary assessment of the impact to determine whether injury to public trust resources has occurred. This is done to determine the extent and severity of the injury to public trust resources. If resources are injured, the injuries are quantified and possible restoration projects are identified. Studies assess the natural resource injuries and loss of services. A restoration plan is developed that outlines approaches to aid the recovery of injured resources. The final step is to implement restoration actions and monitor their effectiveness. **T. Baker** stated that NRDA is a cooperative, legal process where the polluter pays for all restoration. He reported that for the Deepwater Horizon assessment the Gulf of Mexico was divided into six zones. Within each zone, the resources affected, the ecological services affected, the injury indicators, and the ecological connection between resources were all examined. **T. Baker** stated that the ecological connection was vital to determining if the injury was limited to one zone or if the injury spanned multiple zones. **T. Baker** stated that a notice of intent to conduct restoration planning was published in the Federal Register on October 1, 2010. They will be holding public meetings around the Gulf to gather public input. Next, **T. Baker** discussed restoration options. He stated that the options included emergency restoration, primary restoration, and compensatory restoration. He stated that you needed to consider the allocation of any restoration funding, how much the settlement would be, and that the full extent of the injuries was not fully known at this time.

**R. Adami** asked if BP had provided any restoration funding yet. **T. Baker** responded that BP had provided restoration funding, but not as part of the official NRDA process. He stated that each state had received money. **J. Gill** stated concern that funding decisions and funding priorities were always political in nature and did not always follow scientific advice.

### **Potential Oil Spill Restoration Projects/Techniques in the Gulf of Mexico**

**H. Finley** stated that she would now like to discuss the types of restoration projects that could be performed or different restoration techniques. **J. Mareska** stated that the restoration is going to be tied to the amount of damage caused by the oil spill. He asked if the trustees would be getting a lump sum payment for restoration or if it would be disbursed over the course of several years. **H. Finley** stated that with oil spills in the past, Louisiana would usually restore marsh habitat in coastal

areas. She questioned whether this would be the best approach to mitigate impacts of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. **J. Rester** asked how you would mitigate impacts to habitat in water that is a mile deep. **H. Finley** reported that Louisiana would be starting a hatchery program to raise marine fish. **T. Baker** stated that the goal of restoration would be to make the Gulf of Mexico healthier. He stated that you could do this by reducing the size of the hypoxic zone off Louisiana and reducing dredging in certain coastal areas. **T. Baker** stated that trustees could acquire coastal property and hold it in trust to prevent development. Many Subcommittee members stated that they were not sure how their state would proceed with restoration at this time, but they would be interested in knowing what restoration projects or techniques that other states were proposing. The Subcommittee would like to discuss restoration projects and techniques at the March Subcommittee meeting.

### **Election of Chairman**

**H. Finley** nominated R. Mezich as chair with C. O'Brien seconding the nomination. R. Mezich was unanimously elected chair. **C. O'Brien** nominated K. Anson as vice chair with H. Finley seconding the nomination. K. Anson was unanimously elected vice chair.

### **Other Business**

**J. Clark** stated that Mississippi was currently restoring Deer Island. Their goal is to increase the size of the island by 300 acres. So far, 80 acres have been restored.

**R. Adami** reported that Texas continued their stock enhancement program stocking red drum, spotted seatrout, and flounder. He stated that 2011 would be the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the derelict trap removal program. Texas has removed approximately 27,000 traps and should reach the 30,000 mark next year. **R. Adami** reported that the lower Texas coast has seen unusually low salinities this summer with salinities down in the teens. He stated that companies are investigating the use of algae to produce biofuel and that Texas was trying to deal with regulating this potential enterprise.

**R. Mezich** stated that the Port Dolphin LNG facility is close to being permitted. **R. Mezich** stated that lionfish have been spotted off Pensacola and off southwestern Florida.

**H. Finley** stated that they were busy with modeling fishery impacts from the Violet Diversion. She reported that concrete mats had been used to cover several pipelines. Testing has shown no negative impacts. Shrimp trawls and skimmer nets have been run over the mats without serious interactions.

***With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.***

APPROVED BY:  
*Ralph E. Hode*  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**EMERGENCY DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAM (EDRP)  
MINUTES – 60th Annual Spring Meeting  
Tuesday, October 19, 2010  
Orange Beach, Alabama**

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  
Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Lance Robinson, TPWD, Dickinson, TX  
Richard Cody, FWC-FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Mark Berrigan, FLDOACS, Tallahassee, FL  
Dr. Steve Geiger, FWC-FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Rene' LeBreton, LSPMB, New Orleans, LA  
Chris Denson, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Chris Blankenship, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Mike Brainard, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Kara Hoar, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Mark Schexnayder, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA

**Others**

Ellie Roche, NOAA/NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL  
Steve Bortone, GOM Fisheries Management Council  
Michael Bailey, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Steve Meyers, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD  
Eric Schwaab, *Assistant Administrator*, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD  
Jeff Brown, NOAA Fisheries, SERO, St. Petersburg, FL  
Dave Burrage, MS/AL Sea Grant Consortium, Biloxi, MS  
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Gwen Hughes, Gulf South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Tampa, FL  
Bob Zales, PCBA, Panama City, FL  
Mark Kelley, Lady Kelley Charters, Panama City, FL

**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  
Joe Ferrer, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Larry Simpson, *Executive Director*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

## Opening Comments

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

Participants and visitors were introduced. Eric Schwaab, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service, was introduced and briefly thanked the Commissioners and staff for role in the disaster recovery programs ongoing in the Gulf.

## Agenda

**R. 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 9, 2010 held in Orange Beach, Alabama were presented for approval. *There being no changes to the minutes a motion was made by M. Ray and seconded by V. Vail and the minutes were approved as submitted.*

## Introduction and Purpose

Special recognition was given to **Ellie Roche** who 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.

**R. 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 79 percent of its budget while the timeline for the grant was at approximately the 70% point. Note was made that spending through September 2010 was nearly \$98 million which reflected improved spending rates over the previous report. 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. **R. Hode** pointed out that the oyster component remained the most active component Gulf wide and that about 83% of the appropriated funds had been spent to date. It was also noted that some delays were experienced in the summer months due to the DWH disaster. It was further noted that cooperative research was also progressing well with approximately 80% of programmed work completed to date. The Habitat component, though only at 66% of its planned spending has seen significant work accomplished during the past few months in Alabama's shoreline stabilization project. Overall, however, Habitat continued to lag due in part to the DWH event of April 20<sup>th</sup>.

With reference to EDRP II spending, **R. Hode** indicated that Gulf wide reimbursements continued to be ahead of the grant timeline. Program coordinators and principal investigators were commended for having distributed nearly 80% of the \$85 million appropriated for economic assistance to the Gulf fishing industry during the first 33 months of the 60 month

cycle. It was also noted that Florida, Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi had completed the distribution of their portions of the "Additional Assistance for TED/BRD Compliance" requirement; and that Texas was likely to send out checks over the next thirty days. **R. Hode** reported that the required 2 percent amounted to nearly \$1.68 million and that spending through September 2010 had amounted to \$1.69 million – completing the required 2% condition.

**R. Hode** also gave a briefing on the upcoming Oil Disaster Recovery Program (ODRP) that had been approved in September. It was pointed out the ODRP consisted of both a Marketing component at approximately \$15 million covering MSC, Web Based marketing and expanded seafood testing to assure quality assurance; and Stock Assessment Enhancement component at approximately \$10 million, which would be a joint effort involving NMFS and GSMFC.

### Overview of Projects

#### **FLORIDA**

**V. Vail** reported that the TED/BRD additional assistance component under EDRP II had been completed. A total of 386 checks have been sent out at approximately \$103 per recipient. **V. Vail** noted that some \$1,700 was unclaimed and that the State has now voided these checks. Each check amounted to slightly over 100 dollars.

**R. Cody** reported on the electronic log book program funded under EDRP II in the for-hire segment of Florida fisheries. The program was initiated in May of 2009 and was completed in July of 2010. To date, of the 1,600 plus possible participants only about 46 have signed up for the "assistance for service" project and only 36 31 actually participated. **R. Cody** noted that because of low participation the program essentially converted from a log-book survey to a "fixed panel" survey; but indicated, however, that even with the low participation the department believes the effort resulted in sufficient information to form conclusions regarding at sea trips. The Department is in the process of analyzing the data that was collected and expects to have some results by the end of the year.

**R. Cody** also reported that because of low participation on the log book program the Department opted to enhance ongoing at sea on board observer programs aimed at species discard analysis and expanded tagging. It was concluded that the enhanced at sea observer trips provide assistance to impacted boat owners while generating additional data. It was also noted that because of the DWH disaster, the at sea trips were delayed during the early to mid summer time period due to closure of area waters; but, with recent re-openings the enhanced at sea observer program is expected to get back on schedule. Approximately forty trips were funded through EDRP II prior to the closures and those vessels that were initially eligible for the log book program were utilized for the expanded observer program. **R. Cody** noted that all the trips paid for through EDRP II were in the Florida Panhandle area and in the Keys area of Lee and Collier Counties.

**M. Berrigan** reported on the Florida Department of Agriculture oyster restoration program indicating that both EDRP I and II are complimentary in that both are geared to restoring the State's oyster reefs. **M. Berrigan** reported that restoration work in the spring and summer time period was routine and that the Department saw minimal significant impacts or delays in planned work because of the DWH disaster. Planting areas were altered somewhat, however, to avoid westerly locations in anticipation of possible oil impacts. Approximately 10 K CYs of cultch materials were planted in the Bay County and Apalachicola areas and in the Swauny Sound during the summer; and most work was conducted by Department personnel. The Swauny Sound effort also saw approximately 80 K bushels of live oysters relayed/transplanted during the period.

The City of Cedar key also worked closely with the Department in the establishment of staging areas from which equipment and access to the oyster gourds was facilitated for restoration of the shallow water areas around Big Bend area of the State.

**M. Berrigan** indicated that funding of the transplanting program originally scheduled for the Apalachicola Bay area was re-aligned because of compensation by BP. A portion of the funds originally scheduled for work in the Bay area were transferred to the Franklin County restoration program wherein area fishermen are hired to plant cultch in shallow water areas. He also noted that approximately one half the overall budgeted oyster program had been completed but that program was just now beginning to get into full swing.

From a budgeting perspective it was pointed out that about one half of the budgeted oyster program had been completed. Measurable and significantly noticeable work only began in late 2009 because of equipment needs (barge construction); and, as a result the Department will likely be seeking a no-cost time extension in order to complete planned work. **M. Berrigan** reported that they had just now begun to get up to speed on restoration. The Department also continues to purchase fossilized shell for cultch and to participate in a shell buy-back program with local processors for additional shell; and anticipates the use of contract barges to facilitate more expeditious planting on public grounds over the next year.

The Department is continuing cooperative work efforts with Franklin County to complete the East Pont waterfront access facility so as to enhance access to the fishing grounds in this part of the State. It was also reported that a similar project completed in 2008 in the west Apalachicola Bay area was temporarily used for staging of oil spill containment. This area is expected to be restored to oyster operations in the near future. Additionally, the Department continues to monitor growth on rehabilitated reefs and is coordinating its data with NRDA data being gathered by NOAA Fisheries.

Concurrently, the lease holder participation component of the recovery program was delayed because of concerns regarding possible oil impacts on the oyster lease grounds. **M. Berrigan** also noted that because the number of leaseholders who elected to participate in the program was low he expects an expanded/amended scope of work that would provide additional lease restoration for those leaseholders who have participated thus far.

**S. Geiger** reported on the oyster larvae research project which is being conducted under the EDRP I Cooperative Research sub award through the FWC Research institute. The intent was to predict the number of larvae in the Pensacola Bay and to predict through hydrologic modeling where restoration would/could best be accomplished. The Hydro models have been completed as has most of the sampling. Currently, the Department is in the process of verifying some of the earlier findings and finalizing a contract for the development of the life history of larval in order to complete the model.

Most of the budget funds have been utilized to date and with the exception of the life history component the project appears to be complete.

## **ALABAMA**

**C. Blankenship**, who is acting DCNR/MRD Director while Vernon Minton recovers from surgery, briefed the Committee on Alabama's oyster program. The State conducted an oyster relay during the reporting period wherein nearly 100,000 sacks of oysters were relocated from closed areas up in the Mobile Bay to an 800 acres site that was not affected by the oil spill and which saw little impacts from oyster drills as experienced at other reefs in the lower Bay areas. Harvest was expected in the fall of 2010. Additionally, cultch plants were planned for the spring of 2011 and the State was rebidding the purchase of a self propelled deck barge, approximately 14 x 40, to be used for oyster work including a mobile oyster check station. Estimated costs were \$350K.

**C. Blankenship** also reported on the near completion of the Little Bay shoreline stabilization project project south and west of the Bayou La Batre area and the Dauphin Island Sea lab egg and larval distribution project. It was pointed out that because of the DWH oil spill, much of the data gathered earlier by the Lab under this program proved invaluable as baseline data for comparisons of pre-event and post-event larval impacts and recovery. It was also pointed out that the State's trip report program (CPUE studies) initiated under the Cooperative Research component had been placed on hold because fishermen could not make charter trips into closed areas during the summer. This work is now re-started as waters are opened and will complete in November of 2010.

There was some discussion regarding the findings from the DISL and whether that information could be shared with sister states. Both Florida and Alabama agreed to get together independently to discuss the program.

**C. Blankenship** reported on the progress of the Alabama Farmer's Market program involving the construction of a seafood by-product recovery facility. It was noted that EDRP II is supporting this project through the purchase of necessary equipment including current plans for the purchase of a seafood refuse truck for collection and delivery of crab hulls, shrimp heads and hulls, and related processing by-products for recycling. The truck is determined to be an integral component to assure timely removal and processing of waste materials.

**C. Blankenship** also reported on the State's ongoing Remote Monitoring program wherein cameras are to be used for monitoring fishery activity at ramps and inlets at select and often



remote locations in the south Alabama area. It was also reported that the State has implemented a discard pilot program utilizing charter boat captains to monitor snapper discards over an 8 week period to evaluate trends and disposition of fish returned to the water.

## MISSISSIPPI

**D. Diaz** provided a briefing of EDRP activities noting that less was done in the April – September period than in previous due to staff commitments to DWH. Specifically, nearly \$3 million of planned oyster cultch plants were delayed in both the spring and fall pre-spat time periods because of uncertainties related to the oil spill. It was noted that in hindsight, both plants could have been carried out because the oil spill had little impact on the State reefs and periodic reef monitoring revealed that they had good spat set. Current plans are to complete these plants in the spring of 2011. **D. Diaz** indicated however, that the State expects to request a no-cost extension since some of the projects are simply not going to be completed by the end of the original five year time period.

**V. Herring** noted that GSMFC has already been approved for a one year time extension and saw no problem with state extensions beyond September 2011 for EDRP I when adequate justification is provide. She emphasized that the States must formally request extensions and that because GSMFC has already been granted the extension the state requests will be approved by GSMFC instead of NMFS.

In other work, **M. Brainard** reported on the Cooperative Research component wherein approximately 550 bay balls were installed on the Cat Island reef and two steel hulled vessels were sunk for artificial reef structure on fish haven 13 during the reporting period. Work was also completed on the Jail House located off the Waveland area of Hancock County. Nearly 1,600 tons of rubble from the Hancock County Jailhouse were deposited during the period.

## LOUISIANA

**C. Hoar**, who replaced J. Hanifen after his retirement, updated the committee on progress in Louisiana. It was noted that under EDRP I most of the oyster rehabilitation program had been completed with only the lease data management component/job remaining. It was reported that a contractor had been selected for electronic documentation of oyster lease data and that scanning of lease information was under way. **C. Hoar** reported that plans for a menhaden bait program had fallen through following the DWH oil disaster and that the Department was re-evaluating use of the balance of the habitat funds. It was also reported that the post Katrina economic survey of business impacts under the Cooperative Research sub-award had essentially been completed but that evaluation of the data would require an estimated twelve months to complete.

Questions were raised regarding the impact that the DWH oil disaster had had on the State's oyster resources. **C. Hoar** advised that impact analysis was still on-going but that preliminary findings indicated that actual oil damage was minimal; although there were noted increases in mortality coincidental with the oil spill, unusually high water temperatures during the reporting

period and increased fresh water flow introduced to combat possible oil intrusion into marsh areas.

Under the EDRP II sub-ward it was reported that the Assistance to Fishermen component had essentially been completed, including the TED and BRDs requirement; but that the State continued to work with its contractor in utilizing rubble materials (102 spans) from the damaged Lake Pontchartrain Causeway for an artificial reef construction program in the Lake.

**E. Smith** reported on the direct marketing component of EDRP II noting that the funds appropriated to the state are being leveraged to support a number of seafood promotion events, programs and festivals that spotlight Louisiana seafood. It was noted that the DMP component complements recently developed plans for marketing promotions following and integral to recovery from the DWH oil disaster. **E. Smith** highlighted an ongoing web-based marketing program which was instituted in part utilizing EDRP II funds – noting that web based marketing successes are becoming more recognized as the premier marketing tool to link buyers and markets with processors and distributors throughout the Country. On questions regarding measurement of the short term impacts of web based marketing techniques, **E. Smith** indicated that significant leads reported at the Boston Seafood Show this past year were attributed to contacts made through and measured with the web based effort.

It was pointed out that the “Market Maker” program is being facilitated through the Louisiana Sea Grant program but that the Louisiana Seafood Marketing Board is also supporting the Sea Grant effort. **E. Smith** emphasized the importance of utilizing and tapping into social media opportunities through web based programs to counter false perceptions – noting specifically that the Seafood Marketing Board is challenged to find reputable bloggers and related commentators to respond to false or misleading information.

## TEXAS

**L. Robinson** reported on the status of its habitat mapping program funded under EDRP I. To date, nearly 120 square miles of bay bottoms in Galveston Bay and Sabine Lake have been mapped and verified through traditional ground truthing methods. **L. Robinson** also reported on a digital geo-referenced sidescan imaging system that is being used with sonar data to develop a library of various digital data sets that when overlaid with other data results in the classification of bottom habitat. They are working with Texas A&M in this effort. Additionally, the Department has conducted sub-bottom profiling of select marine water bodies in its coastal region and is preparing to release a paper on that effort shortly.

Under the habitat component, **L. Robinson** reported that oyster cultch planted in September of 2009 has seen tremendous spat set and that legal oysters are in place at this time. However, plans are to allow these sites to remain closed in order to assure good growth and to open them in November 2011. In so doing, the state is examining the effects of/potentials for rotation of reefs (much like crop rotation) in order to improve harvests.

Under the EDRP II component, **L. Robinson** reported that checks for the TED/BRD component have finally been released. The number of applicants was significantly lower than the number of eligible applicants and resulted in increased payments (approximately \$50 Vs \$24 per recipient). **L. Robinson** also reported that engineering requirements for marsh restoration has been completed and that the State expects to see actual restoration begin in the next few months.

*There being no further discussion or business the Committee was advised that the next meeting would be in March 2011 and that the time and place would be announced.*

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting  
Tuesday, October 19, 2010  
Clearwater Beach, Florida**

**Chairman Joey Shepard** called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The following members, Staff and others were present:

**Members**

Virginia Vail, FWC, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Tallahassee, FL  
Richard Cody, FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Joey Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Chris Denson, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
John Mareska, ADCNR/MRD, Dauphin Island, AL  
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Mark Schexnayder, Proxy for Harry Blanchet, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Steve Turner, Proxy for Bonnie Ponwith, NOAA Fisheries SEFSC, Miami, FL  
Mike Ray, Proxy for Jerry Mambretti, TPWD, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Austin, TX

**Staff**

James Ballard, GSMFC, Sport Fish/Aquatic Invasives Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Jeff Rester, GSMFC, Habitat/SEAMAP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Larry Simpson, GSMFC, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, GSMFC, RecFIN Programmer/Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ralph Hode, GSMFC, EDRP Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Joe Ferrer, GSMFC, Systems Administrator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Debbie McIntyre, GSMFC, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Wendy Garner, GSMFC, CFO, Ocean Springs, MS  
Janet Lumpkin, GSMFC, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Michael Bailey, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Frank Courtney, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Terry Cody, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL

**Adoption of Agenda**

J. Shepard suggested that the Committee move the “Overview of the New Oil Disaster Recovery Program” agenda item to follow State/Federal Reports. **A motion to adopt the agenda, with this modification, was made by K. Cuevas and was passed unanimously.**

**Approval of Minutes**

**A motion to approve the minutes as written for the March 9, 2010 meeting was made by J. Mareska and passed with no opposition.**

**Resource Monitoring Plans as a Result of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster**

**Florida: R. Cody**

Richard gave an overview of Florida’s activities in response to the oil disaster. He stated that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) was designated as the State’s lead Agency for oil response and their role is to coordinate other state agencies responses. The Florida Division of Emergency Management provided their Geospatial Assessment Tool for Operations and Response (GATOR) which provides the public and other agencies with information for better coordination of response efforts. FWC continues to coordinate with other agencies on a variety of response activities, including participating in the unified incident command, providing scientific guidance, assisting with GIS mapping, as well as helping with pre- and post-impact assessments. For post-assessment activities, FWC is looking at ways to integrate them into ongoing data collection programs while remaining within the protocols and scopes of work of these existing programs. Richard explained the Rapid Response Oil Spill Research Grants that were made available through \$10,000,000 from BP. The Florida Institute of Oceanography was used as a “clearing house” for this grant money. Of 223 competitive proposals, 27 were funded covering five basic categories, extent of spill, impact assessments, integrated coastal and ocean observing, data integration & dissemination, and mitigation & remediation. Richard provided the following table showing some of the funded projects:

<b>Title</b>	<b>Institutions</b>	<b>PI</b>
<b>Early Warning 4-D Remote Sensing System to Assess Synoptic Threats to Coastal Ecosystems of Florida and of Adjacent States and Nations</b>	<b>USF, UM, FIT, NOAA AOML</b>	<b>Muller-Karger, Frank</b>
<b>Baseline For Impact Assessment of Zooplankton and Imaging Oil Droplet Detection on the West Florida Shelf</b>	<b>USF, Eckerd</b>	<b>Daly, Kendra Lee</b>
<b>Molecular diagnoses of coral exposed to oil and dispersants: a holobiont approach to investigate potential effects on corals</b>	<b>FAU, Mote, FWRI</b>	<b>Edge, Sara Elizabeth</b>

<b>Effects of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill on Epipelagic and Large Coastal Sharks and Teleosts of the Gulf of Mexico</b>	<b>MML, UNF, FIT, USM, NOAA/NMFS, FIU</b>	<b>Hueter, Robert Edward</b>
<b>Penetration, accumulation and degradation of BP DWH oil in Florida sandy beaches</b>	<b>FSU, Eckerd</b>	<b>Huettel, Markus</b>
<b>Coast Watch: Remote sensing and verification sampling of oil spill impact on Florida Coast</b>	<b>FSU, UWF</b>	<b>MacDonald, Ian</b>
<b>Acute Effects of Oil on Northern Gulf of Mexico Reefs and Reef Communities</b>	<b>UWF, FAMU, NMFS</b>	<b>Patterson, William F. III</b>
<b>Impacts of the 2010 Deep Water Horizon Oil Spill on Estuarine Bottlenose Dolphin populations in the West Florida Panhandle</b>	<b>UCF, Mote, FWRI, NMFS, NOS, MSU, UCF</b>	<b>Worthy, Graham</b>
<b>A Coordinated Modelling Approach in Support of Oil Spill Tracking</b>	<b>USF, FSU, UM</b>	<b>Weisberg, Robert</b>
<b>Biodegradation of the Deepwater Horizon oil in Florida marsh ecosystems and exploration of novel passive remediation strategies</b>	<b>UF</b>	<b>Zimmerman, Andrew Robert</b>

**Alabama: C. Denson**

Chris pointed out that for Alabama’s monitoring efforts, they are continuing with their ongoing routine monitoring programs and they are currently negotiating with BP to fund a seafood tissue testing program. For the tissue testing program they are looking at, they will be either working with the Alabama Department of Public Health and/or the Alabama Department of Agriculture. They are also looking at some long-term monitoring for fisheries. Through the EDRP they have been funding a project with Dauphin Island Sea Lab to collect larval and egg data in the Gulf of Mexico and they are hoping to use this data extensively for monitoring the effects of the oil spill. Chris also stated that Alabama is heavily involved in the NRDA process for oysters and they are starting to make some good head-way in this effort.

**Mississippi: D. Diaz**

Dale started by going over DMR’s seafood safety testing. He stated that they started testing of shrimp, finfish, crab and oyster May 23<sup>rd</sup>. These samples are taken twice a month during their normal IJ sampling events and 20 tissue samples are sent to the lab for each sampling event. The majority of these samples are being analyzed at the Mississippi State chemistry lab. To date, most samples have come back as non-detect with only a few samples having trace levels 100-1000 times below levels of concern. DMR plans to keep this tissue sampling going as long as there is a public perception problem, however, as of October 1<sup>st</sup> they dropped it back to once a month. Dale pointed out that they have had some meetings with BP about paying for this sampling effort into the future, but nothing has been finalized because they want a set date that DMR wants to sample to. BP is supposed to get back with them on how much they are willing to pay per sample. At present, DMR is paying the lab \$380/sample. As far as further resource

monitoring goes, DMR has let BP know that they would like to do more to keep track of the fisheries into the future. For inshore waters, they are looking at expanding their existing IJ sampling. BP has not offered a firm commitment on this request at this time. DMR is also exploring the possibility of partnering with the state of AL on some additional resource monitoring and putting together a proposal for the \$500 million in research funding put up by BP. This would be a much more comprehensive monitoring effort than is proposed under the IJ program and would have an offshore component.

**Louisiana: J. Shepard**

Joey stated that they started development of their "Inshore and Nearshore Resource Monitoring Plan" early on in May because they knew there was going to be a long term impact from the oil spill. He also made it very clear that this is not NRDA. This plan was approved for funding by BP on August 17, 2010 and they guaranteed three years of funding for a total of \$13,217,617 (inshore \$4.4 mil., nearshore \$5.7 mil and offshore \$3.1 mil.). The inshore resource monitoring will consist of increased spatial & temporal coverage from existing program to assess areas impacted by oil but not currently sampled. This will basically be doubling the current level of sampling for inshore waters and will utilize a number of sampling gears. Joey provided a map of the inshore sampling area and the sampling schedule in his presentation. The nearshore section will be an intensive monitoring program of the waters from 5-40 fathoms based on the SEAMAP protocol with a total of 384 samples taken per year. The offshore component will be contracted with LSU and Texas A&M-Galveston to monitor fish assemblages and ichthyoplankton densities associated with reefs. Joey also pointed out that with all of this sampling, Entrix (BP's contractor) will have their personnel onboard and they will be taking their own samples. This is part of the agreement with BP and provides them with a sampling platform to do their own monitoring.

**R. Cody** pointed out that the states should be working together to get the most out of monitoring money for BP and to make sure there is no duplication of effort. **L. Simpson** stated that the Commission's meetings would be a perfect forum for these cooperative discussions and urged the states to keep pushing for at least five years of monitoring funding from BP. Larry also stated that the TCC can have a standing agenda item to keep up on what each state is doing in regards to resource monitoring.

**Texas: M. Ray**

Mike expressed that Texas has received \$500,000 from BP for response to the oil spill and for cleaning up the small amount of oil that entered Texas waters; however, they are not receiving any BP money for resource monitoring. Texas will continue with the normal monitoring that they have been conducting for the last 35 years with an addition of 21 new sites for the NRDA process.

**NOAA: S. Turner**

Steve stated that they continue to work with the Office of Restoration as well as NRDA to monitor the impacts of the spill. They have received \$10 mil. in emergency funds for stock assessment and have routed a large portion of the funds through the GSMFC. One thing these funds will be used for is to support the SEDAR process. NOAA is continuing with their seafood sampling program with both an at-sea (open and closed areas) and dock-side components.

## **Subcommittee Reports**

### **Crab: S. VanderKooy**

The Subcommittee started their meeting by having each state report on their status related to the BP disaster. LA has experienced incremental reopening and currently only have 4% of their state waters closed. At the height, Louisiana had 70% of its waters closed. They reported that many of the crab fishermen were employed by BP as VOO boats. They may use some of the VOO for fishery independent sampling later. One of the affects from BP is that a lot of traps were left out since oil disaster. Preliminary landings obviously were down considerably thru July. However, prices were high for both processed and live crabs. The big issue is still perception; the public has serious concerns over safety even with the positive news from testing. FL experienced minimal impacts on the panhandle. A mail survey has been issued to blue crab fishermen looking at efforts as well as issues related to the BP disaster. They will provide a copy of the survey and the results as they come in. AL has continued to test crabs and has not detected any problems. They have now reopened all waters to commercial harvest. As expected, effort in 2010 has been down but value continues to be high. MS had difficulty with public perception. Some of the public is very concerned and the DMR has produced a safety newsletter to explain the testing and results. These newsletters have been provided to processors and the public and have been printed in both English and Vietnamese. All the MS state waters reopened after 8/21 for consumption.

Steve reported that Gary Bower of Pontchartrain Blue Crabs approached the LDWF to certify the Louisiana blue crab fishery as sustainable. The pre-assessment looked good so a grant was awarded to help pay for the cost of the full assessment by Scientific Certification Systems in California. One of the potential problems is the bycatch of Diamondback terrapins. Another issue will be the choice of models and the development of overfishing thresholds and triggers. They are probably a year or two away from getting certified but certification will be a requirement to sell domestic seafood in places like Wal-Mart and Sam's.

An issue that was brought to this committee at the last meeting was mercury advisories related to blue crab consumption. Steve pointed out that at this time there was very little to report as follow-up on the advisory status for Gulf blue crabs in the Seafood Watch type literature distributed at supermarkets around the country. The issue originated with the EDF recommendations which have been picked up by a number of other 'watch dog' groups. The subcommittee pursued the source of the advisories being used with little success until Dave McKinney from EDF stepped in and we got some response. The source seemed to be old advisories for Port Lavaca Texas and the EDF may need to update their advisories. The hope is that if possible, they would ask secondary groups to do the same and provide a green status to Gulf blue crabs if warranted.

The Subcommittee had an update on the status of Florida's lipofuscin research. Florida has set up a hatchery and is successfully hatching and rearing crab larvae. They did not have enough to stock into nursery facilities however. In addition, they harvested wild population crabs using otter trawls and captured 600 crabs around 2-4mm to go into ponds. Those crab experienced incredible growth rates reaching 40mm in only two weeks. They could reach market size in only 6-8 months. The lipofuscin techniques in the lab have been going well. FWRI has tested between left and right eyestalks with no significant difference, however, they did find a significant difference between frozen and fresh samples. As a result, they will be harvesting only one eyestalk and processing them fresh. They are able to detect changes on a



quarterly basis and should have substantial results by the next meeting. It is hoped that the wild known-age crabs in the ponds can be compared with additional wild-caught bay crabs to validate the lipofuscin standards.

The Subcommittee elected Ryan Gandy as their new chair.

**K. Cuevas made a motion to accept the report and it passed unanimously.**

**SEAMAP:**

**J. Rester** stated that the first thing the subcommittee discussed was the SEAMAP Fishery Independent Data Workshop that was held in September. The purpose of this workshop was to help SEAMAP because they are currently going through a strategic planning process and also updating their 2011-2015 management plan. Several data needs were identified at the workshop for the new Stock Assessment Enhancement Program that will be managed by the Commission. The subcommittee discussed these needs at their meeting and developed a list of recommendations for the Commission and the new ODRP Ad Hoc committee. Read Hendon was reelected as the Subcommittee's chair with Bob McMichael serving as vice chair.

**A motion to accept the report was moved by M. Ray, and passed without opposition.**

**Habitat:**

**J. Rester** pointed out that the Subcommittee started their meeting with a joint session with the Artificial Reef Subcommittee to discuss the "Best Management Practices for Inshore Artificial Reefs" Document that was started by the Habitat Subcommittee about a year and a half ago. After a lengthy discussion, the Subcommittee passed a motion to turn the document over to the Artificial Reef Subcommittee for their recommendations on how to move forward with the document and to try and create a revised draft document that both subcommittees can agree on that still address the concerns that the Habitat Subcommittee has that initiated the creation of the original draft BMP's document. The Habitat Subcommittee then heard a presentation on the NRDA protocol for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill response to bring the entire group up to speed on how NRDA is being carried out. The group then discussed potential oil spill restoration projects and techniques that could be incorporated into the NRDA process in the future. The Subcommittee reelected Ron Mezich as the chair.

**D. Diaz made a motion to accept the report and it passed unanimously.**

**Data Management:**

**K. Cuevas** reported that Gregg Bray reviewed the biological data collection at the GSMFC. He stated that there were shortfalls this year for a number of species due to the oil spill and resulting fishing area closures. Gregg pointed out that all states had summated their 2009 age data and it all has been loaded into the database. Dave Donaldson gave an update on the commercial vessel information project. The contractor hired to help on this project continues to identify unique vessels but they have run into a problem using the HIN and are going to look into using registration numbers instead. Donna Bellais demonstrated the non-confidential data porthole created for the Fisheries One Stop Shop project which is a regional data sharing program created under FIS. The subcommittee also discussed quota monitoring trip ticket issues related to the

SERSC's goal of having all federally permitted commercial dealers reporting electronically by 2011. Alex Miller reported about some proposed economic add-on questions for the For Hire Telephone Survey that were proposed by the NOAA Fisheries economists. The Subcommittee also had an update on the MRIP Gulf of Mexico For-Hire Logbook project pilot program that is taking place in Florida and Texas. For this program they are currently using three forms of validation, drive-by direct observation, dockside interviews, and at-sea observer trips. The Gulf Council asked the Subcommittee to discuss the possibility of establishing a fish tag system, similar to a duck stamp, as an effort limitation system or a data collection program. The Subcommittee elected Chris Denson as their chair with Vicki Swann serving as vice chair.

**A motion to accept the report was moved by D. Diaz, and passed without opposition.**

**Artificial Reef:**

**J. Ballard** stated that the Subcommittee started out with a joint session with the TCC Habitat Subcommittee to discuss the "Best Management Practices for Inshore Artificial Reefs" document. The result of this session was a motion being passed by the Habitat Subcommittee to pass the document to the Artificial Reef Subcommittee for their recommendations on how to move forward with the document and to try and create a revised draft document that both subcommittees can agree that still address the concerns that the Habitat Subcommittee has that initiated the creation of the original draft BMP's document. Following this session, the Artificial Reef Subcommittee had a long discussion on the possibility of, and how we would go about, establishing a Gulf-wide monitoring protocol for artificial reefs. Such a monitoring protocol would establish the base-line data needed to demonstrate how the reefs perform over time and allow us to assess impacts from man-made/natural disasters. This year's oil spill has underscored the necessity for this type of program in the Gulf. Currently all states do some form of monitoring either by contracting out to local universities or using their own staff. Most of these efforts are just snapshots in time and do not address the need for a long term data set for base-line data. Following this discussion, the Subcommittee decided they would like to be able to track the biomass, species diversity, water quality and the physical projections of their reefs over time utilizing a video component with this protocol. With these goals in mind each state agreed to draft up a sampling protocol that they would use to reach the desired goals on a representative sample of their entire reef system given the assets at their disposal. The subcommittee will review these five documents and look for ways to standardize them as much as possible at their next meeting in January/February 2011.

**Ballard** gave an overview of the lionfish invasion in the western Atlantic, Caribbean and most recently the Gulf of Mexico. This invasion was first documented in Biscayne Bay, Florida when a beach-side aquarium broke during Hurricane Andrew in August 1992. Since then it has rapidly spread, do in part to its very prolific and successful reproduction rate. In the Caribbean, this species is becoming the most abundant species of their size on the reefs and are reaching densities eight times higher than in their native range. In the last month, the lionfish made it to the northern Gulf and there have been 6 confirmed sittings from LA, AL and the panhandle of FL.

**M. Ray made a motion to accept the report and it passed unanimously**

### **State/Federal Reports:**

The following reports were provided to the TCC members prior to the meeting for their review and the authors only briefly went over the high points during the meeting.

### **Florida Report: V. Vail/R. Cody**

#### **Deepwater Horizon:**

Florida was less directly impacted by the Deepwater Horizon incident than other Gulf states; only state nearshore waters from Escambia Bay [Pensacola] to the Alabama state line were closed because of the presence of oil and tar balls; both have been recovered from panhandle beaches. However, significant response costs were incurred in pro-active attempts to minimize the potential for damage to the resources along the Gulf Coast and to address a national/international perception that Florida's beaches and fishing were shut down because of the oil spill. As of August 27<sup>th</sup>, state and local governments had received \$110 million from BP Oil for response and economic recovery efforts: \$50 million was allocated to local governments for response and recovery [booms, beach cleaning, etc.], \$32 million was allocated for promotion of tourism by local governments and VISIT FLORIDA; \$8 million was allocated to the Department of Environmental Protection for state Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) activities; \$7 million was allocated for employment and training opportunities for those without jobs because of the oil spill; \$10 million was allocated for research on oil spill impacts; and \$3 million was allocated for mental health care. In addition, the Florida has requested \$159 million from BP for quality control monitoring/testing of Gulf fish and shellfish.

Florida's Department of Environmental Protection is the lead agency for the response to Deepwater Horizon event. Pursuant to statutory direction, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Wildlife Research Institute [FWRI] provides technical support and response to the Department of Environmental Protection for oil spills, ship groundings, major marine species die-offs, hazardous spills, and natural disasters. In addition, the Divisions of Marine Fisheries Management [DMFM], Habitat and Species Conservation [HSC, imperiled species management], and Law Enforcement [LE] provided staff and equipment for response to the incident. Staff efforts included aerial surveillance flights to map extent of observed oil and check reports of reported oil slicks, production of maps, interagency and interstate response planning and coordination, wildlife protection, recovery and rehabilitation, and shore/beach monitoring and clean up. Response costs incurred by the FWC through August 2010 totaled just over \$7 million, not including an estimated \$8 million that is needed to replace equipment [vessels, vehicles, trailers, ATVs, motors]. To date [August], reimbursements totaling \$2.4 million have been requested.

The FWC issued several Executive Orders in response to the economic impact Deepwater Horizon was having and might have on the commercial and recreational fisheries and associated businesses. The Orders opened certain fishing seasons [Apalachicola Bay oysters, bay scallops] a little early, extended the Biscayne Bay food shrimp season by one month, waived the regional two week blue crab season closures for the current fishing year, and extended the June 30 expiration date of commercial saltwater fishing licenses to September 30. These actions allowed harvest ahead of possible fisheries closures in case oil were to reach Florida waters; the 90 day extension of the license meant fishers would not have to pay for a license they later couldn't use if state waters had to be closed to fishing. The permit requirements for a vessel to enter Manatee No Entry Zones and Manatee Motorboat Prohibited Zones were waived to facilitate and expedite

oil spill response efforts, but transit plans had to be filed with law enforcement and a “manatee observer” had to be present when vessels were transiting the zones.

With reference to wildlife impacts: Birds - 495 visibly oiled birds [25 species, but mostly northern gannets] were recovered; 401 were recovered dead or died in rehab, 33 have been released and 61 are still in a rehabilitation facility. In addition 723 not visibly oiled birds were recovered dead but have not been necropsied to determine the cause of death. Sea turtles – 142 visibly oiled turtles were recovered; 2 died, 127 recovered and were released, and 13 are in rehabilitation facilities. In addition, 257 turtle nests from panhandle beaches were relocated to Canaveral National Seashore/ Kennedy Space Center area and nearly 16,000 hatchlings, mostly loggerhead sea turtles, were subsequently released into those waters. Manatees – no manatees were found to be affected by the oil spill. One visibly oiled dolphin was rescued.

#### Extreme Cold Event – January 2010 – Follow Up

With reference to snook, this popular game species is very sensitive to cold and many died during the prolonged cold spell. The Commission extended the annual winter closed season through September 16<sup>th</sup> to give the population additional time for recovery, especially during the spring spawning season. During this time staff evaluated the cold’s impact using data from the long-term fishery independent monitoring [FIM] projects in Tampa Bay, Charlotte Harbor and the north and south regions of the Indian River Lagoon, angler surveys, Everglades National Park creel surveys, and FWRI’s snook acoustic tag program. FIM data on monthly abundance, yearly abundance and length frequency for the period January – June 2010 were compared to similar data for the same periods over the years 1997 – 2009. Angler catch rates for January – June 2010 were compared to those in January – June 2002-2009. In summary, snook abundance in each location is the lowest it’s been in 13 years; the length-frequency distribution trend is increasing indicating fewer small snook are present. Catch rates of adult snook varied by coast: in the Indian River Lagoon on the east coast there was no discernable change from historic catch rates; on the Gulf Coast all catch rates were down from previous years; catch rates in the Everglades National Park showed a sharp decline from the increasing trend in previous years. After reviewing this information, the Commission opened the snook season on the Atlantic coast; the winter season closure for east coast snook on December 15 remains in effect. The Commission extended the prohibition on harvest of snook from Gulf waters [including the Florida Keys] until 1 September 2011. Catch and release fishing for snook is allowed during a closed season. Other fish species are being similarly monitored for future assessments.

With reference to manatees, 2010 has not been a good year. Through mid-September 651 dead manatees have been documented, well above the five year average of 288 for this time period. Of the 651 deaths, 245 were due cold stress (5 year average: 26), 172 from undetermined causes (5 year average: 61), and 67 unrecovered (5 year average: 7). It’s possible that the high numbers in the undetermined and unrecovered categories had something to do with the extreme cold, but data is inconclusive. The previous record of 429 manatee deaths in one year occurred in 2009.

#### Legislative Update

The 2010 Legislature repealed the \$7.50 fee established last year for the resident saltwater shoreline fishing license; residents not otherwise exempt from holding a fishing license are still required to have this free license to fish from shore. For FY 2010/2011, the FWC received \$1.14 million in General Revenue funds from the Legislature to mitigate the loss of this license

revenue. The Legislature also enacted a law that prohibits the use, possession, breeding, sale, trade, or barter of any species on the list of Commission designated Reptiles of Concern (e.g., pythons, Nile monitor lizards) and authorized the assessment of civil fines of up to \$10,000 per animal for violations involving importation of prohibited reptiles. A bill that would have exempted eligible commercial fishers age 65 and over from the \$50 fee commercial saltwater products license fee failed to pass.

With reference to the state budget, the Florida Legislature faced some very difficult decisions. The FWC, with 1947 FTEs and a budget of almost \$300 million, feels fortunate because, unlike at other agencies, no positions were eliminated and only \$1.8 million in actual program funds was cut. A \$4.6 million reduction in the Commission's General Revenue Trust Fund appropriation was compensated for by shifting those budgets to other trust funds. And \$10 million in cash balances was swept from two trust funds to meet other state needs. Fund shifts and cash sweeps do not have an immediate impact on program spending or services provided, but they do limit the funds available for future program activities (both recurring and non-recurring needs). However, many of our significant budget requests - related to land management, land acquisition, youth hunting and fishing programs, artificial reef construction, boating improvement projects - were approved.

State employees will not see a salary increase again this year, but neither will they see a pay cut by salary reduction or furlough or have start contributing to the state retirement program this year; the health insurance subsidy for retirees was not eliminated. However, state employees previously exempt from paying a portion of their health insurance premiums will now contribute \$100 per year for single coverage and \$360 per year for family coverage. Health insurance premiums in general increased by 5% but the state will cover this increase.

Although the FY 2010/2011 budget has been approved, if anticipated revenues are less than the appropriations there may be additional budget cuts (maybe 5%) during the year. If the outlook for revenue collections does not improve for FY 2011/2012, budgets could be further reduced by possibly 10-15% in the 2012 legislative session. If this occurs, the Commission would likely have to cut staff positions and programs.

#### Other FWC News

##### Artificial Reefs Program:

National Geographic Magazine is currently working on an article on artificial reefs featuring photographs by Underwater Photographer David Doubilet. Several Florida artificial reef vessels will be included in the magazine including the *Hoyt Vandenberg*, the *Oriskany*, the *Duane*, including some unintentional wrecks like the *Benwood* sunk for target practice in the Keys as well as some east coast sites as far north as North Carolina including a German U-boat (U-352 sunk off Morehead City, NC by Coast Guard Cutter during WWII).

In August 2010 Dr. David Palandro of the FWC Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and a team of half a dozen divers inspected the aircraft carrier *Oriskany* [sunk off Pensacola] for evidence of visible subsurface oil. No oil was found. There are plans to search for residual oil on several other artificial reefs in deeper waters off Florida, Alabama and Mississippi.

Five artificial reef construction projects are scheduled for the Gulf this year (2010-2011): Citrus County [Crystal River], Pinellas County [St Petersburg], Bay County [Panama City], and Okaloosa County [Destin] using secondary use concrete products or concrete reef modules. In addition a large University of Florida Project consisting of 450 patch reefs (each composed of

four concrete cubes 3 ft on a side with 24" opening through centers) to be deployed seaward of gag grouper juvenile sea grass habitat in the Florida Big Bend area in an attempt to enhance survival/fitness of young of year grouper moving out of sea grass habitat in search of hard bottom structure. In the last fiscal year (2009-2010) seven artificial reef construction projects resulted in the development of 13 new patch reefs, and six monitoring projects in which 207 patch reefs were monitored.

On September 9, 2010 during an inspection dive on Escambia County's "George Wilkins" Goliath Reef Ball artificial reef system, FWC staff observed a lone lionfish (*Pterois sp*), about 5 inches long, resting among fouling organisms on the exterior of a 4,000 pound hollow "Goliath" reef ball (vertical relief about 3.5 ft, base diameter feet) in 90-91 feet of water south of Pensacola Pass. The reef ball was on sand substrate about 30-40 feet from its nearest neighbor reef balls. This is the most northerly and westerly Florida Gulf Coast lionfish observation (see: U.S. Geological Survey map: <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/taxgroup/fish/lionfishdistribution.aspx>). Manatee County (waters off Cortez) appears to be the next most northerly Florida Gulf Coast sighting with the exception of a dead specimen found off Pinellas County (presumed aquarium dump) in 2006. (Note: since September 9, a lionfish has been documented from waters off Alabama).

Also, within the last year lionfish sightings in the Florida Keys and Southeast Florida on both natural and artificial reefs have increased dramatically. Over 580 lionfish were brought in during a local tournament sponsored by the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary the weekend of Sept. 11-12, 2010. The very first documented lionfish sighting in the Florida Keys was off Key Largo in January 2009 and the specimen was removed. This may not bode well for the northern Gulf of Mexico as lionfish apparently can tolerate temperatures as low as 56 degrees. F.

#### Regulatory Actions:

In the last six months Commissioners approved rules that: extend Florida's regulations governing harvest of bonefish (1 fish bag, 18" minimum size, hook & line gear only, no commercial harvest) to federal waters; capped the number of commercial ballyhoo/lampara net endorsements issued at the current level of 17, limited the number of endorsements a person could hold to two, and allowed transfer ballyhoo endorsements; brought Florida's regulations for swordfish and Spanish mackerel into consistency with the federal swordfish and Spanish mackerel regulations; allowed oyster harvesters to be on the water and at oyster beds as long as the tongs were stowed before sunrise so they would have more time to fish before delivering product to the dock by 11:30 am in the summer (noon in other months); established a weakfish management area in Northeast Florida wherein the very similar sand sea trout, weakfish and their hybrids are to be considered weakfish and any outside that management area are to be considered sand sea trout; and within the management area reduced the recreational weakfish bag limit from four to one and established a 100 pound commercial harvest/possession limit. In addition the Commissioners directed staff to proceed with proposals that would alternate years for the regional 10 day blue crab fishery closures on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts established to facilitate trap retrieval and specify that blue crab endorsements could be transferred between eligible parties from May 1 through February 28 each year) and establish Northwest, Northeast and South management regions for red drum and increase the recreational bag limit from one to two in the Northwest and Northeast regions.

### Commercial Fisheries

From January 1 through July 31 of 2010, a total of 126,338 trip tickets were received of which 67% were submitted electronically. Electronic tickets accounted for roughly 71% of the species records. During the same period, 135,173 tickets were edited which accounted for 317,028 species records. Despite the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, the numbers for edited and received trip tickets appear to be a little lower than expected based on activity for the same period in 2009. Related to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, the Trip Ticket Office completed more than 750 individual requests from commercial license holders for landings information. To expedite the process, fishermen who submitted notarized requests were allowed to have their landings information sent by FAX to regional British Petroleum (BP) claims offices as long as the SPL holders making the request were present at the office.

There has been considerable discussion on potential improvements to catch/effort information on the trip level. Being able to apportion catch within a trip would allow for improved effort estimates by allowing the appropriate assignment of catch to the correct gear types and areas fished. FWC is looking in the feasibility of modifying the paper ticket to include the information. Limited options for ticket imprinters are available and it is likely that the current models (a single manufacturer) would require modification to accommodate larger tickets. Steve Brown has reviewed a modified Dealer data entry program produced by Bluefin Data Inc. that is better able to handle multiple gear types within a trip and is satisfied that the program changes involve only minor changes to the data entry routine for dealers using the system. As trip ticket printing for FY10 has been completed, the very earliest a new version of the trip ticket could be printed is July 2011.

The Fisheries Dependent Monitoring subsection assisted the Seagrant Extension offices with the mailing of Trade Adjustment Assistance packages to licensed shrimpers. A total of 465 packages were mailed. A secondary newsletter was also mailed. Because of confidentiality laws, the process for mailing was complicated and we are examining the possibility of a memorandum of understanding that would allow Extension offices associated with the Florida State University System to obtain address information from the FWC.

In a collaborative effort with Atlantic coast states and involving input from NOAA SEFSC staff, FDM partnered the submission of a proposal to ACCSP to fund the collection of biostatistical data, the goal of which would be to update or improve conversion factors used with commercially caught species. For some species, grades, or market categories, current conversion factors are poorly documented and/or based on averages that may be outdated and of questionable spatial/geographic application. If funded, the project may be of significance to the TCC in that data collection will include the Florida Keys in addition to the Atlantic coast of Florida.

### Recreational Fisheries

All baseline recreational angler intercept quotas were met for the period of the oil spill and FDM is on target for 39,000-40,000 angler intercepts for the calendar year. According to MRIP/MRFSS effort estimates for all modes and areas fished combined, recreational effort was down approximately 14% in 2010 based on the average effort for the first three waves of the previous four years. The reduction in overall effort doesn't provide any insight into displacement of effort in terms of species targeted or area fished. The For-Hire Telephone Survey (FHS), expanded to provide greater resolution to for-hire effort estimates continues. Calls are being made to 40% of active vessels on a weekly basis with a goal of providing more

timely, accurate and precise effort estimates for the for-hire sector on a weekly basis. Estimates for Florida Gulf of Mexico regions (Panhandle, Peninsula and Keys) through mid-September are available from the NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology website. The FWC staff members making the calls to vessel representatives had some concerns initially that the increased frequency with which the calls were being made would increase the refusal rate but this does not appear to have been as great a problem as anticipated. Another potential problem was the start of the MRIP Gulf of Mexico pilot logbook program. The pilot study limited to federal permit holders, started in October and has experienced low participation in the first couple of weeks. Participation is expected to improve as more permit holders become aware of permit requirements to provide data as requested for the pilot logbook program. GSMFC, Florida and Texas are working to reduce data duplication and reporting burden on vessel operators by allowing substitution of logbook data for vessel operators selected in the FHS in any given week. The directed study of the recreational red snapper fisheries in the along the West Florida Shelf continued despite reduced availability of for-hire fishing trips on which reef fish could be tagged. Vessel availability was affected by the BP Vessel of Opportunity Program (VOO) which placed vessels on-call for oil clean-up and restricted routine recreational and commercial activity of the vessels. The red snapper project includes at-sea components to (1) collect detailed information on released catch and (2) a reef fish tagging study to investigate mortality. In addition to the field components, there is a monthly mailing to licensed anglers, the purpose of which is to characterize the recreational red snapper fishery in the Gulf and a catch card program that targets recreational red snapper anglers. Thus far, more than 9,000 fish have been tagged in the project through June, 2010. Species tagged include red snapper, red grouper, gag, scamp, gray triggerfish and vermilion snapper. Tagging trips originate in the Tampa Bay and Panhandle regions, with the Panhandle trips providing the majority of tagged red snapper and Tampa Bay trips yielding most of the tagged red grouper. Recapture rates for red snapper and red grouper stand at 3.6% and 7.2%, respectively. Through August 2010, more than 130 for-hire fishing trips were sampled in the program.

The Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP II) for-hire panel logbook survey completed a year of online data collection. Data collection lasted 52 weeks, ending in mid-July, 2010. There were 46 vessels involved in the weekly online survey. Vessel operators provided information on catch as well as effort. Participants receive EDRP II funds for completing the survey and presently, the process to distribute funds to those participants is underway. The remaining funds are being used to provide payments to EDRP II-eligible for-hire operators who carry on-board observers. These trips provide a boost to sample sizes for fishery dependent reef-fish tagging and discard data collection programs directly impacted by the for-hire sector while providing additional business to operators.

Other projects that are ongoing include two NOAA funded Cooperative Research Projects (CRPs) that focus on reef fish mortality and aspects of their life history. The former is providing information that can be used in stock assessments to better gauge discard mortality by collecting information on hook location as well as size at depth information for the recreational catch. Thus far, more than 3,700 fish have been tagged and 133 trips sampled. The other CRP focuses on the three dominant inshore snappers in the Florida Keys: gray-, mutton- and vermilion snapper. This project has provided more than 4,400 otoliths and gonad samples from these three species, and includes directed trips made by recreational fishers.

In addition to the pilot logbook survey, FWC also has a second NOAA MRIP project that is examining the feasibility of video monitoring of released catch for the recreational sector.



Specifications for a video system were provided to potential manufacturers and the first prototype has been completed and will be tested on a number of volunteer private boats later this year. The project is the first to examine video monitoring of catch for the recreational sector.

### **Alabama Report: C. Denson**

#### **Fisheries Section**

The Alabama Marine Resources Division (MRD) Director, Vernon Minton, has taken a leave of absence due to health reasons. Major Chris Blankenship (MRD Chief Enforcement Officer) has been named Acting Director in Vernon's absence.

Little River Bay marsh rehabilitation project located near Bayou La Batre has been completed. Funding for this project is provided through the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP). This work was anticipated to be completed earlier in the year, but was postponed due to DWH.

EDRP fisherman assistance programs have been extended through November 30, 2010. Reports could not be completed due to closure of some state and federal waters in response to the oil spill.

MRD coordinated the relay of over 6 million pounds of oysters and cultch material from reclassified waters in upper Mobile Bay to a newly constructed reef in lower Mobile. This new reef will be opened for harvest for a limited time period in October.

A SEAMAP summer cruise was completed with one station omitted due to the presence of surface oil. MRD and Dauphin Island Sea Lab through the SEAMAP program have begun a fishery-independent vertical line survey. Survey will address reef fish abundances on structured and unstructured environments, age composition and selectivity patterns for varying hook sizes.

The Fisheries Section began using a new online Conservation Operations Reporting On Numerous Activities (CORONA) to complete weekly, monthly and fleet maintenance reports. This system has replaced paper reporting for these reports and eliminated duplicate data entry. All cost of maintenance and operations will be tracked more efficiently and reports can be produced in a timely manner.

MRD's Fishery-Independent Assessment Monitoring Program (FAMP) samples were collected and processed for biological/hydrographic data at monthly intervals to maintain continuity of the 30-year program. Bi-monthly catch reports were submitted to GSMFC.

MRD created a data entry program, AMRD Sampling Application (ASA), in order to increase the efficiency of recording, editing, and proof reading data generated from the FAMP program. FAMP protocols have been restructured in order to generate data that is consistent with the SEAMAP groundfish program.

MRD participated in a number of public outreach events. One event in particular was the annual children's art calendar contest where area 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students participate. Submissions

were judged by local artisans and the winners will be displayed in MRD's 2011 Children's Art Calendar.

MRD met with the Auburn Shellfish Laboratory for the development of a small oyster aquaculture operation. Seed oysters were provided to a couple of local private lease holders by the AU shellfish lab for growth studies utilizing three different farming configurations.

In September 2010, Governor Bob Riley approved the plan for TORP's Bienville Offshore Energy Terminal (BOET). The LNG terminal will be located 63 miles south of Alabama and will utilize a closed-loop regassification system.

Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) funds have been awarded to MRD for much needed renovation and construction activities within the Division. Plans include the construction of a new laboratory and office facility at Claude Petet Mariculture Center (Gulf Shores) and the renovation of boat basins located at Divisional offices in Gulf Shores and on Dauphin Island.

MRD collected a total of 1,291 MRFSS interviews between March 1–August 31, 2010. However noticeable decreases in intercepts was observed during the oil spill.

#### Enforcement Section

The Alabama Legislature passed an Oyster Management Bill that will allow the MRD to better manage our oyster resources. The bill will allow for the implementation of oyster management stations to allow us to better record the amount and condition of harvest. The bill also changed the tolerance for undersize oysters, standardized the information required on the harvest tags, allowed an increase in the cost of the tags to include the cost of printing, expanded the use of dredges, removed the ability for private lease holders and others to take seed oysters from the public reefs, expanded our oversight of the marking of private leases, created a shell fee to pay for planting and other oyster management costs, and raised the fines for violations.

A regulation was signed by the Commissioner of Conservation that brought our current "Saltwater Fish, Creel, Bag, Possession, and Size Limits" more in line with federal regulations concerning prohibited sharks and other prohibited species. This regulation also made it illegal for a vessel under the jurisdiction of Alabama to possess a red drum in federal waters.

An updated "Commercial Taking and Landing of Gulf Reef Fish" regulation was signed that closes Alabama waters to the harvest of any Gulf Reef Fish species when adjacent federal waters are closed to the commercial harvest of that Gulf Reef Fish species. Previously the regulation only included red snapper. It also made it illegal for any one to buy or sell reef fish that are managed under an individual fishing quota unless the dealer is permitted to purchase said fish and has the correct endorsement. The regulation also made it a state requirement for commercial fishermen landing Gulf Reef Fish in Alabama that are managed under an individual fishing quota to abide by the provisions of 50 CFR Part 622 for the landing, offloading, transporting and reporting of Gulf Reef Fish. This regulation went into effect on June 20, 2010.

The "Open Season for Gulf Reef Fish Species" regulation was promulgated that states that any time federal waters adjacent to Alabama are closed to the recreational harvest of any Gulf Reef

Fish species that Alabama waters will also be closed to the taking of that species. Previously the regulation only included red snapper. This regulation went into effect on March 18, 2010.

The "Use of Nets and Harvest of Mullet" regulation was updated to make some much need changes for clarity of the regulation and to assist the fishermen by simplifying some of the closures.

The MRD Enforcement Section was awarded the NOAA Cooperative Enforcement Program "Excellence of Quality Award" at the 2010 Cooperative Enforcement Conference in Miami, Florida. The award was presented for demonstrated excellence in leadership, strategic planning, industry focus, knowledge management, workforce focus, innovation, process management and results in the area of marine conservation law enforcement.

#### MRD Oil Spill Response and Activities

MRD contributed significant personnel time and resources to the oil spill response. Numerous staff members were assigned to the Mobile Unified Incident Command post to assist in Alabama's coordinated response to the Deep Water Horizon (DWH) incident.

MRD responded to fish kills, turtle/mammal strandings, and surface oil reported through the DWH call center. Reports were highly elevated due to protocols of response workers and the vigilance of the public.

MRD collected baseline, monitoring and reopening tissue samples for finfish, oysters, crabs, and shrimp.

MRD Enforcement Officers operated continuous patrols to enforce area closures and conducted daily mapping surveys of deployed booms. Boom coordinates were relayed daily to UIC for use in booming strategy and maintenance.

MRD has been working closely with Natural Resource Disaster Assessment (NRDA) process especially in the development of the oyster assessment plan.

Alabama began closing state waters to commercial and recreation fishing as a precautionary measure due to the presence of oil on June 1. By June 10, the final closure was implemented resulting in a total closure area of approximately 351 square miles representing around 45% of Alabama's marine waters. From the initial date of closure to the final date for reopening (with exception to Gulf waters for shrimp), a total of 81 days had elapsed.

Alabama's shrimp opening, which typically occurs in June, was delayed until July 23 due to the threat of oil. Only waters not closed in response to the oil spill were opened for shrimping.

The oil spill has resulted in significant economic losses for coastal Alabama. Two of the hardest hit industries have been the tourist and seafood industries although accurate estimates of these losses are not available at this time. MRD has observed a preliminary sales decrease of 67% in the number of recreational saltwater fishing licenses issued during 2010 as compared to 2009 for the May through August time period. This decrease represents a loss of \$650,000.

## Mississippi Report: K. Cuevas

### Enforcement

The Office of Marine Patrol, JEA Marine Law Enforcement activities for April 2010 – September 2010 consisted of 5,433 boat patrol hours with 2052 contacts, which resulted in 326 total citations. These citations mostly consisted of violations concerning red snapper and sharks.

### Office of Marine Fisheries

The Office of Marine Fisheries participated in three public meetings related to seafood safety. This was to communicate to our constituents sampling efforts and laboratory results that have been completed to ensure the safety of Mississippi seafood.

Staff continues to sample shrimp, finfish, crabs and oyster tissues bi-weekly (monthly starting in October) from the Mississippi Sound. Tissues from these samples are sent to the Mississippi State Chemical Laboratory for PAH analysis. The state also collected tissue samples for analysis by NOAA and the FDA. These samples were collected and tested according to FDA protocol and all Mississippi waters were open to commercial and recreational harvest of seafood during August.

Personnel from the Office of Marine Fisheries have also been sampling shrimp in federal waters, which were recently opened to commercial fishing, off the Mississippi coast. This sampling has been in cooperation with several commercial fishermen by order of the Governor's Commission on the Deepwater Horizon Response.

### Shrimp and Crab Bureau

Staff participated in Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival and the Pascagoula River Nature Festival to encourage terrapin education, crab trap TED use and help with installation. Outreach to MS crabbers and trap builders has resulted in over 2,584 crab traps (10,334 TEDs) equipped to protect terrapins.

2010-2011 Live Bait Shrimp Dealer inspections and licensing of sixteen dealers, thirteen vessels and six transport vehicles were completed.

The Bureau Director was deployed to the Mobile, AL Deepwater Horizon Incident Command Center from April 29 through July. She was active in the Environmental Planning Section protecting sensitive areas including on-going boom strategies and shoreline cleanup policies, as well as guidance for the Vessel of Opportunity Program (VOO). Bureau staff has been instrumental in extensive baseline and response sampling and sentinel flights.

Mississippi waters opened to shrimping on June 3, 2010 at 6 a.m. Good catches were reported on opening day, however only 70 vessels were counted in an aerial survey. After many area closures resulting from encroaching oil, **ALL** Mississippi waters were closed to shrimping (along with all other fisheries) July 1-30, 2010.

Mississippi shrimp landings to date are down 81% mainly due to the closures brought on by the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. Effort has also much lower than normally expected, with most of Mississippi shrimp fleet working for BP in the Vessels of Opportunity Program.

The National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, using BP monies, is funding on-going DMR projects to address potential increased recreational and commercial fisheries interactions with sea turtles. These monies will be used to provide commercial and recreational fishermen with NOAA sea turtle guidance documents on protection, disentanglement and resuscitation, providing free TEDs to skimmer trawl shrimpers to use voluntarily, and an observer program to collect data on the fisheries. To date, DMR has distributed 248 TEDs for skimmer trawls and have been on board Mississippi shrimp vessels for fifteen turtle observer trips.

Staff is currently working on an Endangered Species Act proposal with the Institute for Marine Mammals Studies (IMMS) to further research and protect sea turtles in the Mississippi Sound and adjacent waters.

The Shrimp and Crab Bureau recently developed a Mississippi Seafood Safety Newsletter which will be distributed to all Mississippi commercial fishermen, processors and dealers. The newsletter, which can also be found online at DMR's website, contains a summary of the effort and results of the data that the Office of Marine Fisheries has been gathering in conjunction with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality to ensure that Mississippi seafood is free of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and is safe for consumption.

#### Shellfish Bureau

The MDMR Shellfish staff is continuing its monitoring efforts by conducting one-minute dredge tows on the oyster reefs. Staff also collects weekly water samples in compliance with the National Shellfish Sanitation Program. In response to the oil spill this program was intensified to enhance existing data. This includes the square meter dive samples and an additional intensive cell reef assessment on the commercial reefs. The staff coordinated with the MDEQ and Marine Patrol to sample the Mississippi Sound and south of the barrier islands collecting water and sediment samples to determine if there was oil contamination.

The R/V Conservationist relayed 600 sacks of oysters to north Telegraph Reef. Also, the Stewardship program held three boat trips on the R/V Conservationist to sample the commercial oyster reefs with the oystermen, processors and dealers. The mission of these trips was to determine the condition and present status of the reefs.

An Oyster Task Force Committee meeting was held on September 16<sup>th</sup>. The group met to discuss the status of the 2010/2011 Oyster Season, opening the season for harvest, dates of possible openings and sack limits.

The Natural Resource Disaster Assessment team has partnered with MDEQ, NOAA, MDMR and BP contractors to use established scientific techniques to assess possible damage to the oyster resource from the oil spill. A seventy-page draft of sampling protocols was developed as a result of tri-weekly teleconferences and daily end-of-the-day meetings with representatives from LA, MS, AL and FL. This plan was used to identify areas of concern from the oil spill and to determine possible long-term damage to the oyster reefs. The various components include larvae, sediment, water quality, disease, condition index and tissue samples. Qualitative, quantitative, and mortality data is also enumerated. Currently these protocols are being utilized and sampling will continue.

### Artificial Reef Bureau

In April we deployed an 87 foot shrimp boat "Ole Faithful". This vessel was donated by Walter Marine to the Mississippi Artificial Reef Program. EDRP funds were used for sinking of this vessel.

The construction of Jail House Key in western Mississippi Sound off Hancock County was completed. During this period of time there were thirty-six deployments totaling 10,650 tons of concrete rubble.

### 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. A Casting for Conservation kids fishing tournament was held on July 31<sup>st</sup> at Biloxi's Point Cadet. Approximately 120 kids participated in the tournament. Personnel are working closely with the Coastal Conservation Association to schedule future Casting for Conservation kids fishing tournaments. These tournaments utilize EDRP II public outreach funds.

The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) collected 1,049 from April 1, 2010 to September 26, 2010, meeting quotas in Shore Fishing and Private Boat Modes for Waves 2 and 3, and meeting the month's quota for September. The 1x quota was met in Charter/Headboat mode in Waves 2 and 3, but not the 2x. Quota was missed in Charter/Headboat Mode, as well as Private Boat Mode for Wave 4. These quota shortfalls were due to water closures from the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, as well as the Mississippi Charter Fleet taking part in the Vessel of Opportunity Program.

New recreational fishing records for April 2010-September of 2010.

### Conventional Tackle:

King Mackerel (*Scomberomorus cavalla*) 74 lbs. 1.6 oz. – Barrett McMullen

Fly-fishing Tackle: No records during this time period

### Seafood Technology

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' Seafood Technology Bureau participated in eighteen seafood safety educational and promotional public outreach events in January 2010 – September 2010. Participated in community outreach events sponsored by BP like "BP Community Resources and Claims Fair" in Biloxi, MS and Gulfport, MS.

STB staff attended the Gulf and South Atlantic Shellfish Sanitation Conference in Orange Beach, Alabama from August 15-19, 2010, and the Food Safety Month Seminar Workshop on Food Allergens: "Dealing with Food Allergens: Who's Responsible? What you need to know?" at Jackson, MS on August 31, 2010. Staff attended two different training sessions of the Seafood Assurance program developed to assist the seafood industry in providing additional evidence for the safety of all seafood harvested from the Gulf of Mexico. Over seventy-five members of the Mississippi Seafood industry attended the training.

Recertifications have been completed for FY 2010-2011 for fifty-five seafood dealers and processors. Twenty-two temporarily closed and one permanently closed after the Deep Water Horizon oil spill. Continuing regulatory inspections is being done to the certified dealers and processors and 122 courtesy inspections of retail establishments in twenty-five counties had been done for the past four months. These courtesy inspections are being done as an extra safeguard and were initiated shortly after the Deep Water Horizon disaster. They include sensory evaluations and a review of HACCP plans to assure steps are in place to look for potentially tainted seafood.

Biological Sampling for April 2010-September 2010

The table below shows the sampling effort for collection of otoliths. All modes of collection are shown including any samples taken from IJ/ FAM gillnetting effort. Areas blacked out had no quota for sampling due to contractual agreement.

SPECIES	QUOTA		COLLECTED		IND Sampling
	REC	COM	REC	COM	
BLACK DRUM	8		0		16
GRAY SNAPPER		12		0	0
GRAY TRIGGERFISH	7	15		0	0
GREATER AMBERJACK		5		0	0
KING MACKEREL	5		0		0
RED DRUM	24		12	0	27
RED SNAPPER	16	12	0	7	0
SHEEPSHEAD	12	140	1	28	0
SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	154	258	231	130	6
SPOTTED SEATROUT	38		16		92
STRIPED MULLET		408		0	17
VERMILION SNAPPER		14		0	0
COBIA	110				0
RED PORGY		45		0	0
SOUTHERN KINGFISH					3
ATLANTIC CROAKER					34
SPANISH MACKEREL					1
SAND SEATROUT					3

**Louisiana Report: K. Foote**

Deepwater Horizon Disaster

The Deepwater Horizon disaster has impacted many aspects of Department operations.

Fishery Openings/Closings: Since April 28, the LDWF and LWFC have issued 60 declarations of emergency which closed, opened, re-closed or re-opened portions of LA inside and outside waters to recreational and commercial fishing. The last action taken was dated October 7 which maintained recreational and commercial fishing closures in portions of Barataria Bay and the Mississippi River Delta.

Since agreeing to the FDA/NOAA fisheries reopening protocol in mid-July, the LDWF has submitted 7 requests to reopen portions of state waters to recreational and commercial fishing which have resulted in the complete openings of the Terrebonne and Pontchartrain Basins and significant portions of the Barataria Basin. At one point in late spring as much as 70% of saltwater areas of the state were closed to both recreational and commercial fishing. Currently, 7% of saltwater areas of the state remain closed to commercial fishing and approximately 4% of these areas remain closed to recreational fishing except for recreational angling and charter boat angling. Additionally, the LDWF has requested reopening additional portions of the Barataria Basin and if approved would leave approximately 4% and 0.5% of saltwater areas closed to commercial and recreational fishing other than angling, respectively

Tissue sampling for seafood safety: This assessment has been a two-pronged approach, with private testing labs being used to analyze seafood coastwide on a regular, ongoing basis. In addition, the state has entered into a cooperative agreement with NOAA and the U.S. FDA, who analyze samples taken in areas proposed for re-opening after closures due to oil impacts. Both state and cooperative NOAA / FDA sampling programs evaluate the same set of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH). The state sampling also assesses total aliphatic hydrocarbons. To date, 485 statewide samples have been taken for seafood monitoring, none of which have had any PAH level near or above the established levels of health concern. This included several samples provided by individuals that reported suspected oil in their seafood. In addition, 117 samples have been taken for the NOAA / FDA re-opening protocols. None of those have had any levels of hydrocarbons near or above the levels of health concern.

Habitat issues: Fisheries staff have been working on several habitat issues related to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. On the Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA) front, staff is working on developing study plans for assessing damages for: Fish, marine mammals and turtles, oysters, SAV, benthic habitats, shoreline (including marsh and mangrove vegetation). Staff is working with NOAA and contractors in field efforts. This is a long-term task, and is just in the beginning phases.

Fisheries personnel, including Marine Section, Inland Section, and the Marine Lab have also had responsibility for area reconnaissance. That has accounted for approximately 1,678 man days, 757 vessel days, and 704 reconnaissance trips. This information was used to help determine extent and severity of oil contamination in state waters, which was part of the information used in the process of making decisions on closing and re-opening areas for recreational and commercial fishing.

Fisheries personnel also responded to many reports of marine animal mortality events, including fish kills, turtle and dolphin strandings. Characterization of the fish kills was made, and forensic sampling of dead turtles and dolphins was done to attempt to determine cause of death. Collection of dead animals was made when feasible. Several turtles and a dolphin were rescued, and rehabilitated through cooperation with the Audubon Aquarium facilities and staff.

Data Management: Since the BP oil spill over 1,300 requests for trip ticket landings have been processed for fisherman claims. After BP announced that it would require certified copies of trip ticket from LDWF, the Department started receiving multiple sets of trip tickets from previous years, 2008 and 2009 in particular. All late submissions were thoroughly reviewed and



forwarded to LDWF Enforcement for investigation. Several citations have been issued and two arrests for fraud have been made to date. Investigations are still continuing.

Inshore / Nearshore Sampling: In response to the need for information to assess the status of living marine resources in inshore waters, and in the shelf waters off of Louisiana, a long-term sampling program has been designed. The first three years of this program have been funded by BP. Inshore sampling will be a modification of the long-term existing sampling program, with the addition of new stations and incorporating a stratified random sampling design into the existing program. Offshore sampling will consist of a series of trawl transects across Louisiana, using standard 42' SEAMAP otter trawl, and planning to occupy over 380 stations annually. Sample sites will be run from 5 fathoms to 40 fathoms, at 5 fathom intervals. Sampling will be done monthly, in different areas of the state (west, central, and east), so that all areas of the shelf are sampled quarterly.

#### Hurricanes Recovery Programs

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is in the process of completing many of the projects related to hurricane damage assessment and recovery following Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike.

Cooperative Research Surveys: 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 factors that need to be addressed, and in what priority, after a catastrophic event. As of July 31 2010, 296 wholesale/retail seafood dealer surveys and 629 commercial fisher surveys have been scanned. As of July 31 2010, \$12,223,551 has been disbursed under the program.

Commercial Fisherman/Dealer Reimbursement Program: During this quarter 149 first round checks were issued, bringing the overall first round checks to 2,985 (74% of all eligible vendors). Almost \$500,000 was paid out this quarter. This quarter saw a large number of second round checks sent out (1,219), bringing the total of second round checks to 2,193 (73% of vendor who received first round checks). Over 7.5 million in funds were paid out this quarter. Overall, the program has paid out almost 26.5 million in funds to eligible vendors.

Seafood Certification Program: An approved amendment to the grant to develop a seafood certification program for Louisiana, once developed this program will strengthen the industry allowing it to better recover from future disasters. Currently, we are developing and initiating contracts to: 1) develop quality assurance standards for Louisiana shrimp, 2) develop quality assurance research, training programs, testing procedures for quality assurance standards and outreach, 3) establish a trademark for "Certified Wild Louisiana Shrimp", 4) conduct consumer research and creative design services to develop a the logo for the program, and 5) develop a marketing strategy for Louisiana seafood.

Marine Debris Removal Program: Marine debris removal operations are continuing. Contractor has completed side scan sonar surveys in 30 four-square mile grids within Lake Pontchartrain. Based upon analysis of these data, LDWF has assigned the contractor 27 of these grids for

removal of marine debris and this work is ongoing. Additionally, data analysis and search of historical records conducted under a separate marine archaeological contract indicate that 8 objects exhibit some structural regularity and patterning and might represent portions of a shipwreck. These areas will be avoided during the debris removal process.

#### Habitat Programs

On other issues related to Louisiana coastal habitat, personnel are working with other state agencies and the USACE to develop models for prediction of impacts to fisheries from large coastal restoration and management projects. The first such effort was in support of the particle movement models for larval ingress into Lake Pontchartrain with the hurricane levee projects in the "Golden Triangle" area. They have also worked with the USACE in support of the CASM model for the MRGO/Violet effort. The next modeling effort will be to estimate the effects of a possible GIWW alignment across the Barataria basin in the Donaldsonville to the Gulf levee project.

LA is preparing to update the Master Plan for Coastal Restoration and Protection. LDWF staff participated in initial meetings regarding the wildlife and fish inputs to Habitat Suitability modeling for the effort.

#### *Research and Assessment*

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 Spotted seatrout is one of the most popular sport fisheries in Louisiana. A stock assessment of this fishery is currently ongoing. Catch at age tables from fishery-dependent data are being constructed, and population parameters (e.g., growth, mortality) are being estimated at the present time. In response to the DWH MC-252 oil spill, a more comprehensive assessment of oyster mortality is also being conducted using SCUBA and Square meter samples to assess direct mortalities of seed, sack and market-size oysters. Mortality estimates are being estimated state wide and by Basin. To achieve greater confidence in mortality estimates we have increased the number of sample stations and increased the frequency of sampling to weekly site visits.

We have completed a contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to investigate community structure and trends in commercially important species with respect to the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (MRGO). This study used long-term standard sample data collected by LDWF Marine Section from 1988-2009 in the inshore habitats associated with Lake Borgne and Breton Sound. We used data from 16' otter trawls, bag seines, and gill nets along with concurrent water quality data to determine if community structure was associated with changes in salinity, temperature, or turbidity over (1) the entire study period and (2) 5 years prior to and 4 years after Hurricane Katrina. Our multivariate ordination (partial canonical correspondence analysis) of these data revealed that community structure and species diversity has been stable from 1988-2009. However, changes in species composition were more pronounced when comparing the pre-Katrina and post-Katrina periods. Vast amounts of saltmarsh habitat were lost as a result of Katrina's storm surge through the MRGO. Consequently, changes in species relative abundances were detected following Hurricane Katrina. In general, from the 16' trawl data,

there was a statistically significant increase in water column species such as Bay anchovy and striped anchovy with a decrease in demersal species such as Atlantic croaker, flatfishes, and gobies. From gill net data, we found increases in large-bodied omnivorous species such as gafftopsail catfish and Atlantic croaker but also a decrease in predators like spotted seatrout, Silver perch, and Southern kingfish. From seine data, we found significant increases in saltwater-tolerant species such as Atlantic brief squid, blackcheek tonguefish, and gafftopsail catfish with decreases in freshwater-tolerant species like Gulf menhaden, Atlantic croaker, and Gulf pipefish (a species of conservation concern in Louisiana).

We are also working to develop a predictive model of brown and white shrimp using our fishery-independent data (6' and 16' otter trawls) and environmental data such as precipitation, river discharge, water temperature, salinity and cumulative number of flood tide days. In addition we are incorporating economic factors in the analysis such as average fuel prices. Models developed from this analysis will potentially be used to better assist in managing the shrimp fishery in our state waters.

We recently initiated a study to investigate movement and distribution of the federally endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtle. We will be conducting beach surveys to look for evidence of nesting sea turtles on the Louisiana coast, and we are applying 6 Kiwisat™ satellite tags onto adult individuals. These tags will continuously collect data for approximately 9 months to a year. Data from these tagged turtles will be made available to the public via a website that will be used to track the turtles.

We continue to examine the influence of freshwater diversions of the Mississippi River on shellfish and finfish community structure as well as commercial and recreational fishing effort. In particular, we are focusing on the Barataria Basin which is influenced by water diverted from the Davis Pond structure. We have monthly/semimonthly data from 1998 (4 years prior to the opening) up to the present time.

#### Marine Lab

Personnel from the Marine Lab were engaged in a Coastal Assessment project through the Environmental Protection Agency. 97 sites across the state were selected; samples were taken and forwarded to the appropriate laboratories for analysis.

SEAMAP cruises were handled by lab personnel to gain information from fishery independent sampling. Collection gear consisted of 42' trawls, bongo and neuston plankton nets, and CTD rosette for data and water collection.

#### Data Management

LDWF is working with its contractor on conversion from the legacy SAS data management system to a SQL data base with SAS IT analysis capabilities. The contractor has completed the inventory of existing data bases and mapping of data processes. The second phase of the project, development of the relational data base structure, is underway. Data security and access routines are also under development.

Artificial Reef Program

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. The spotted seatrout study includes the derivation of additional genetic markers that can be used to enhance the ability of researchers to distinguish differences between sub-populations of spotted seatrout.

Shrimp Fishery

By most estimates, fishing effort in the LA shrimp fishery is about 25-30% of levels reported last year. Reasons are: many fishermen and vessels still remain employed in the vessels of opportunity program, soft markets, low dockside shrimp prices and current fishing closures in adjacent federal waters of the GOMEX. Good news is that only a small percentage of saltwater areas of LA remain closed to commercial fishing. LA trip ticket data is not yet available but below are preliminary shrimp landings data from NMFS for May, June, July and August.

Landings, (all species, headless, millions of pounds):

	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>August</u>
<u>2010</u>	<u>4.136</u>	<u>4.996</u>	<u>1.326</u>	<u>3.598</u>
<u>2009</u>	<u>12.701</u>	<u>10.903</u>	<u>4.338</u>	<u>5.257</u>
<u>2008</u>	<u>8.614</u>	<u>9.93</u>	<u>3.832</u>	<u>3.212</u>
<u>2007</u>	<u>10.684</u>	<u>14.835</u>	<u>5.815</u>	<u>4.962</u>
<u>2006</u>	<u>15.52</u>	<u>12.968</u>	<u>8.278</u>	<u>11.695</u>

Act No. 606 of the 2010 Regular Legislative Session creates the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force within the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. In addition to an active dock buyer of shrimp appointed by the Governor, voting members shall include nominees submitted by the Louisiana Shrimp Association, American Shrimp Processors Association and the Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

According to Act 606, voting members shall include "three members and three alternate members appointed by the governor each of whom shall possess a commercial fisherman's license with a "certified" endorsement, with four to be selected from a list of six nominees submitted by the Louisiana Shrimp Association and two to be selected from a list of six nominees submitted by the secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Voting members shall also include three members and three alternate members appointed by the governor who are active Louisiana shrimp processors, at least one of whom is selected from a list of three nominees submitted by the American Shrimp Processors Association.

Crab Fishery

Preliminary trip ticket landings data indicate that blue crab landings (millions of pounds) for May, June and July, 2010 are approximately 40%, 52% and 55%, respectively, below levels reported for the same periods last year.

2009		2010	
May	5.7	May	3.4
June	7.1	June	3.4
July	6.0	July	2.7

The LA blue crab fishery is seeking MSC certification, has completed a pre-assessment of the fishery and just begun the process of full certification through Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), an independent contractor hired to assist LDWF with the process.

Act 932 of the 2010 Regular Legislative Session now allows any licensed commercial fisherman holding a gear license, including a crab trap license, to possess any finfish caught under that gear license up to the allowable commercial possession limit. Previous limits restricted crabbers to a maximum of 25 finfish per vessel per day.

The LA Crab Task Force has recently moved to support endorsement of a National Seafood Marketing and Promotional Board.

Oysters

The 2010 oyster stock assessment has recently been released. It showed approximately 1.22 million barrels available on public grounds in Louisiana. It also showed that all 5 of the 2009 cultch plants were very successful with estimated oyster resources between 89.9 barrels per acre (cultch plant in CSA II in Black Bay) to 998.2 barrels per acre (CSA V in Sister Lake).

The 2010/2011 oyster season is scheduled to open in Calcasieu Lake on October 15. Lake Mechant in Terrebonne Parish will open next on October 29 with the balance of the traditional public oyster grounds opening on November 15. Biological sampling continues and modifications to this seasonal framework will occur as needed. All 2009 cultch plants indicated above will remain closed to harvest for the 2010/2011 season.

Extensive side-scan sonar evaluation of public oyster seed grounds is on-going east of the Mississippi River in the Black Bay area. The side-scan portion of the project is complete and ground-truthing will continue through the end of October. This project will provide much-needed and valuable reef-mapping information for the public oyster seed grounds in this area.

Finfish

Louisiana opened, closed and re-opened the recreational red snapper season with creel and size limits consistent with Federal regulations. The recreational harvest of red snapper in the first recreational season was reduced to a small fraction of normal, since many of the waters available to the primary ports for recreational fishing were closed for the entire season.

Louisiana closed the commercial season for Large Coastal Shark consistent with Federal season rules.

Act 979 of the 2010 Regular Legislative Session modified the season for the commercial harvest of spotted seatrout using a commercial rod and reel to run from January 2 of each year until the end of the year, or until the commercial quota is harvested, whichever comes first.

**Texas Report: J. Membretti**

**REGULATORY ISSUES**

In mid-March, a joint meeting with leadership from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department identified a number of strategically important collaborative opportunities and action items on a broad spectrum of issues including oyster reef management, beneficial use of dredge materials, state water planning, federal fisheries management, invasive aquatic species control, and landscape conservation. All participants concluded the meeting was highly beneficial, so plans were initiated for a future meeting in Louisiana.

*Menhaden Total Allowable Catch*

As of 4 October 2010, the current estimated pounds of menhaden caught in Texas and landed in Louisiana during the 2010 fishing season totals 20,401,500 pounds. This represents 58.9% of this year's 34.65 million pound Texas Total Allowable Catch.

**COASTAL FISHERIES PROGRAMS & PROJECTS**

*Fish Stocking Efforts*

2010 Production Totals to date (1 October 2010)

Red Drum = 16,067,042

Spotted Seatrout = 2,164,155

Flounder = 9,446

**PRBMFRS Life History Research**

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 monitoring otolith collections from gill net samples were continued, as was processing and aging of otoliths collected in previous years.

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

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

Temperature tolerance studies of juvenile southern flounder were initiated. An experimental apparatus was designed and tested using juvenile red drum.

### PRBMFRS Genetics Research

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 continued, additional samples from Mexico were analyzed.

A project to track oyster disease severity using QPCR and partially funded by the Texas Water Development Board was continued.

A genetic survey of eastern oysters in Texas bays was initiated.

### Artificial Reef Project

The reef program continued processing a number of Rigs-to-Reefs projects. Nine rigs were reefed, generating \$1.5 million in donations. Another 15 active projects are underway and are in various stages of completion. Three additional reef sites were permitted in the General Permit area of the High Island block, making a total of 61 reef sites in Texas (ranging in size from 40ac to over 300ac).

TPWD continues to wait on a US Army Corps of Engineers permit to expand the Vancouver Liberty Ship Reef, off Freeport, from 40 acres to 160 acres. Over 2,000 tons of concrete were reefed at this site in August, with assistance from the Coastal Conservation Association. The CCA had stock-piled numerous concrete culverts for reefing on this site.

TPWD continues to work with the City of Corpus Christi and SEA (Saltwater Fishing Enhancement Association) to locate and permit a 160ac nearshore reef site in Texas state waters off Corpus Christi. A potential site recommendation will be presented to the City Council this fall.

Alamo Concrete, in Harlingen, will move another 1,000+ concrete culverts to our reef material storage site at the Port Mansfield for future reefing at the Port Mansfield nearshore reef site (7nm offshore) by summer 2011. The total culverts at the site will be over 3,000.

No biological monitoring trips were made during this time period after the reef program's dive boat moved its operations to Louisiana to work for BP during the oil cleanup efforts.

A Google Earth interactive map is under construction for the Reef Program's webpage and should be ready for testing by late October. This map, along with plans for a new website, display, brochures, and outreach events are part of a public relations campaign to promote artificial reefs in Texas.

### Buyback Programs

#### Inshore Shrimp Buyback Program

Inshore shrimp buyback round # 26 application period closed on 9 April 2010. During this round, 45 individual bids were received and a total of 16 (8 bay and 8 bait) licenses were purchased at a total cost of \$128,200. The average purchase price was \$8,012.

Shrimp - Overall totals since 1996

- 2,061 licenses purchased
- 1,038 bay licenses and 1,023 bait licenses
- Total cost of \$13.6 million
- 2,061 / 3,231 original licenses = 64%

#### Crab Buyback Program

Crab buyback round #12 application period closed on 9 April 2010 during which 12 applications were received and 5 licenses were accepted at a total cost of \$48,500 and an average cost of \$9,700.

Crab - Overall totals since 2001

- 50 licenses purchased
- Total cost of \$317,749
- Average price over all rounds = \$6,355
- 50 / 287 original licenses = 17% of total

#### Finfish Buyback Program

Finfish buyback round #15 application period closed on 9 April 2010 during which 18 applications received and 8 licenses were purchased at a total cost of \$69,000 and an average of \$8,625.

Finfish - Overall totals since 2002

- 222 licenses purchased
- Total cost of \$1,263,450
- Average price over all rounds = \$5,691
- 222 / 549 original licenses = 40%

We are currently accepting applications for the first round of the FY2011 for all three fisheries, with an October 29<sup>th</sup> deadline.

### Oysters

Coastal Fisheries staff met with staff from the General Land Office, Chambers-Liberty County Navigation District, and a commercial oyster leaseholder who is trying to acquire additional acreage to use for oyster production in Galveston Bay. The oyster leaseholder doesn't want to use this acreage as a site for relaying oysters from restricted waters, instead wanting to plant cultch materials on these new leases to capture spat from the natural spawn and allowing the oysters to grow naturally to a marketable size. The GLO has indicated they will review their rules and may be receptive to issuing a surface lease for this activity; however, TPWD would have to issue a Certificate of Location to privatize the oysters growing within the lease.



In April, increasing concentrations of *Dinophysis ovum* and *D. caudata* were detected in the pass at Port Aransas. The Texas Department of State Health Services closely monitored bays all along the Texas coast for the toxic alga, which causes a type of seafood poisoning known as Diarrhetic Shellfish Poisoning or DSP. On 23 April 2010, the TDSHS effectively closed the entire Texas coast for commercial harvest of oysters to levels of *D. caudata* and *D. ovum*. (Bays closed included Galveston, West Galveston, Bastrop, Christmas, East Matagorda, Matagorda, Tres Palacios, Carancahua, Lavaca, Powderhorn Lake, Espiritu Santo, San Antonio, Mesquite, and Copano, St. Charles, Aransas and Corpus Christi bays.) On May 21, 2010, the TDSHS lifted its closure of Galveston Bay waters after oyster and water test results indicated safe oyster harvesting could be resumed, allowing the harvest from private leases to continue.

In mid-September, staff met with a group of commercial oyster fishermen and dealers to discuss four oyster management issues. Representatives of the Texas oyster industry expressed support for two of the items: 1) an oyster shell recovery program and 2) authority for TPWD to be able to close areas quickly (within 48-72 hours) when the availability of market-sized oysters drop below an established threshold. Both of these items will require legislative approval. The two items that were left on the table were 1) a reduction in the daily sack limit and 2) how to address the latent licenses in the fishery (e.g. buyback, license fee increase, etc.).

#### SPECIAL EFFORTS, STUDIES, AND TOPICS

On 4 July 2010, the Coast Guard reported five gallons of tar balls from the Deepwater Horizon spill were found on Bolivar Peninsula and Galveston Island. By mid-July, over 700 gallons of material have been recovered from Texas Beaches between Sabine Pass and Sergeant Beach near Freeport, the majority of which came from the beachfront at McFadden NWR. By 16 July, TPWD, TCEQ, TGLO and USFWS completed initial baseline sampling of 21 sites on the Texas coast. Water and sediment samples, shoreline observations, and tar ball assessments were obtained from each site. Follow up monitoring efforts occurred over the following three months. TPWD has been coordinating with US Geological Survey, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and others in the release of rehabilitated oiled birds from the spill impact area to Texas. Rehabilitated oiled birds (mostly brown pelicans) were flown from New Orleans to Texas for tagging and release from Goose Island State Park. Response-related insults are most visible damages resulting from the spill. Booms stranded in the marsh by high tides and raking across fringe marsh have resulted in impacts to coastal wetlands. Crews on 4-wheelers, searching the beaches for tar balls, have impacted dune vegetation. Response vessels working in shallow grass beds have caused additional prop scarring. Access to portions of the beachfront along the upper Texas coast has been restricted to minimize response related impacts.

In mid-July, an outreach workshop for Coastal Fisheries' Pilot Logbook Program was held in Port Aransas. Approximately 20 for-hire fishermen attended the workshop, along with representatives from Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, NOAA Fisheries, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and a web designer from BlueFin Data. All were all on hand to view a brief overview of the program and a presentation demonstrating the web based logbook data entry program.

### 'OTHERS'

In mid-March, Coastal Fishery staff met with GLO staff from the Oil and Gas Leasing Branch to discuss their concerns over TPWD's comment letters regarding oil and gas projects in Texas' inshore waters. The GLO stated that oil and gas companies were complaining that TPWD was preventing them from conducting activities associated with oil and gas operations. It quickly became apparent that the GLO staff from the Oil & Gas Leasing section had not seen one of the Department's comment letters as alternatives are included in the letters and TPWD staff members are willing to work with these companies to minimize their impacts to natural resources.

Hurricane Alex made landfall as a Category 2 hurricane, with maximum sustained winds of 105 mph, on June 30 (Wednesday) around 9:00 PM along the coast of Mexico about 110 miles south of Brownsville.

In early September, Tropical Storm Hermine hit along the Texas/Mexico border and impacted most of Texas with 'her mean' beneficial rains.

Red tide returned to south Texas in late-September. Respiratory distress was reported at South Padre Island. No dead fish have turned up as yet (very low parts per million at this point). Since it showed up early this year, concerns are for a bad year.

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Report: R. Crabtree SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

Deepwater Horizon/BP Oil Spill Fishery Closure Rulemaking and Framework Procedure: On May 2, 2010, NOAA Fisheries Service closed federal waters impacted by the April 20, 2010, Deepwater Horizon (DWH)/BP oil spill as a seafood safety measure. Since then, NOAA Fisheries Service has adjusted the closure boundaries multiple times in response to new information. The resulting closure, at its maximum, was 88,522 square miles (37 percent of Gulf federal waters) prior to the implementation of the Re-opening Protocol agreed to by NOAA, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Gulf Coast states. To date, NOAA Fisheries Service has re-opened over 52,000 square miles of oil-impacted federal waters in accordance with the Re-opening Protocol. To re-open an oil-impacted area, the Re-opening Protocol requires NOAA to demonstrate that the area is oil free, that the area has little risk of being re-exposed to oil, and that tissue samples collected from within the area have passed both sensory and chemical analysis for hydrocarbons. NOAA Fisheries Service's general sampling strategy is to work from the lesser oiled outer boundaries of the federal closure in toward the more heavily oiled areas immediately surrounding the DWH/BP wellhead. NOAA also continues to sample and test fish from areas we re-open to fishing, as well as fish harvested by commercial fishermen Gulf-wide, to ensure seafood safety and improve consumer confidence in Gulf of Mexico seafood. All closed area adjustments are announced through public outlets including NOAA Weather Radio, fishery bulletins, and the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) Web site. The public may also receive updated information on the closed area by calling SERO's toll free number at 1-800-627-NOAA (1-800-627-6622). The bulletins and the toll free recorded message are in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

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 include a seasonal area closure for bottom longlines used to fish for reef fish in the eastern Gulf of Mexico, an endorsement restriction allowing continued use of bottom longlines to fish for reef fish in the eastern Gulf of Mexico by only those 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 by a longline-endorsed vessel in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. A final rule implementing these actions published on April 26, 2010, effective May 26, 2010. The commercial reef fish vessel permit endorsements were mailed to 62 eligible permit holders the first week of May 2010. Fishermen who did not qualify for an endorsement had until August 25, 2010, to appeal the decision by NOAA Fisheries Service regarding their lack of eligibility.

Re-Certification of Bycatch Reduction Devices (BROs) for the Shrimp Fishery: In 2008, NOAA Fisheries Service published a final rule that, in part, provisionally certified the Extended Funnel BRO and the Composite Panel BRO through February 16, 2010. Because no new information exists to decertify these BROs, other than the time-specific requirement, NOAA Fisheries Service published a final rule May 24, 2010, to provisionally recertify these BROs for an additional two years. Having a wider variety of more efficient BROs for use in the fishery allows fishermen to choose the most effective BRO for the specific local fishing conditions. The goal of this rulemaking is to improve bycatch reduction in the shrimp fishery to better meet the requirements of National Standard 9.

Texas Shrimp Closure: On May 15, 2010, NOAA Fisheries Service closed federal waters off Texas to shrimping, in cooperation with Texas when it closes its territorial waters. The closure was in effect until July 15, 2010, when Texas re-opened its territorial waters.

Temporary Rule for Greater Amberjack Accountability Measures: NOAA Fisheries Service published a final rule in June 2010 that adjusted the recreational and commercial quotas for greater amberjack for 2010 to account for quota overruns in 2009. For 2010, the recreational quota will be 1,243,184 pounds (lb); the commercial quota will be 373,072 lb. The intended effect of the quota adjustment is to maintain the rebuilding plan targets for the overfished greater amberjack resource, and meet the regulatory requirements established by the Council in 2008.

Recreational Red Snapper Temporary Rules: At the June 2010 Council meeting, the Council requested that NOAA Fisheries Service publish an emergency rule that would give the Regional Administrator (RA) authority to re-open the recreational red snapper fishing season after the September 30, 2010, end of the fishing season. At the August 2010 Council meeting, NOAA Fisheries Service informed the Council that 2.3 million pounds (mp) remained of the recreational quota after the close of the June 1 through July 23 season. The Council subsequently requested NOAA Fisheries Service re-open the recreational red snapper season for eight consecutive weekends (Friday through Sunday) beginning Friday October 1, 2010. A proposed rule to provide the RA with re-opening authority published on August 16, 2010, with a 15-day comment period. A final rule providing such authority and a final rule announcing the re-opening period published on September 24, 2010.

Amendment 32 draft document (gag and red grouper): A recent assessment update indicates gag is undergoing overfishing and the stock size of red grouper has declined compared to the findings of the last assessment. The assessment update indicated 65-70 percent reductions are needed in total allowable catch (TAC) for gag, and a 25 percent reduction in TAC is needed for red grouper. Until this amendment can be finalized, the Council requested that NOAA Fisheries Service publish an interim rule for gag and the Council has developed a regulatory amendment to adjust red grouper TAC (see items listed below). The Council received a status report by staff on the progress of Amendment 32, but did not take further action at this meeting. The amendment is scheduled for implementation by June 2011.

Gag Interim Rule and Red Grouper Regulatory Amendment: Because of issues surrounding the 2009 gag stock assessment update, which will not be resolved until the Council's February 2011 meeting, the Council requested NOAA Fisheries Service develop an interim rule to address overfishing of gag. After considerable deliberation and input from the public, the Council voted to request NOAA Fisheries Service to publish an interim rule that would release 100,000 lbs of the gag quota for the commercial sector, and temporarily prohibit recreational harvest until an open recreational season can be established through Amendment 32 (see above). The rule will also prohibit the use of red grouper multi-use allocation in the grouper-tilefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program. For red grouper, the Council revisited and re-deemed a proposed rule for a regulatory amendment that would reduce red grouper TAC from 7.57 mp to 5.68 mp; this would result in a 4.32 mp commercial quota and a 1.36 mp recreational allocation. In recent years, neither sector has landed these allocations. These two actions are intended to be effective January 1, 2011. Proposed rules for both actions are expected to publish in early October.

Greater Amberjack Regulatory Amendment: During 2009, the recreational sector met its greater amberjack quota by the end of August. Council and Southeast Regional Office staff developed a regulatory amendment to establish a fixed June-July recreational closed season. A SEDAR assessment update is scheduled for this fall, and results will be available to the Council in early 2011. This draft regulatory amendment is complete, but the Council chose to table this action until a later date.

#### Fishery Openings, Closings, and Landings Summary

Recreational: (recreational landings, catch limits, fishing seasons, and closures can be tracked on the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) Web site at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>.)

The following recreational landings and percentages are based only on the Marine Recreational Information Program through Wave 3, 2010 (January through June), and do not include Texas landings or headboat records, thus the results reported here underestimate total recreational harvest.

Red Snapper: The recreational season opened June 1, 2010. NOAA Fisheries Service projected that the 3.403-mp recreational quota would be met on July 23, and recreational harvest was prohibited at 12:01 a.m. July 24, 2010. As noted above, the Council has requested NOAA Fisheries Service re-open the recreational red snapper fishing season for eight consecutive weekends (Friday through Sunday) beginning Friday October 1, 2010, to allow harvest of the remaining 2.3-mp quota.

King and Spanish Mackerel: Through Wave 3, 1,187,728 lb gutted weight (gw) of the 6.94-mp allocation (17 percent) of king mackerel were landed, and 830,901 lb gw of the 3.913-mp allocation (21 percent) of Spanish mackerel were landed.

Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish: As noted under regulatory actions above, the recreational quota for greater amberjack was reduced to 1.243 mp whole weight (ww) for 2010 to account for 2009 overages. Through June 2010, recreational greater amberjack landings totaled approximately 969,900 lb ww (78 percent of the adjusted quota). NOAA Fisheries Service may have to prohibit recreational harvest of greater amberjack later this year, if the quota is met. Through June 2010, 78,916 lb (17 percent of the 457,000-lb ACL) of gray triggerfish had been landed.

Gag and Red Grouper: Landings through Wave 3 include 930,586 lb of gag (35 percent of the 2.64 mp ACL) and 266,269 lb (14 percent of the 1.85 mp ACL) for red grouper. Recreational fishing for shallow water grouper was closed February 1 through March 31 in 2010.

Commercial: (*commercial landings are updated twice a month on the SERO Web site. For IFQ species, up-to-date landings can be tracked on the SERO's Reef Fish IFQ Web page at <https://ifq.sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/ifq/>.*) Landings reported here are through September 29, 2010.

Red Snapper: As of this report date, 2.084 mp gw (65 percent) of the recently implemented ~3.191 mp gw quota had been landed.

Shallow-Water Grouper (SWG): As of this report date, 380,772 lb gw (27 percent) of the gag quota had been landed; 1,941,236 lb gw (34 percent) of the red grouper quota had been landed; and 135,900 lb gw (33 percent) of the "other" SWG quota had been landed.

Deepwater Grouper (DWG) and Tilefish: As of this report date, 518,414 lb gw (51 percent) of the DWG quota and 181,191 lb gw (41 percent) of the tilefish quota had been landed.

King Mackerel: The commercial fishery for all zones and sub-zones opened on July 1, 2010. Most fishing normally occurs in areas currently closed to fishing because of the Deepwater Horizon/BP oil spill; landings have been minimal in both the western zone and northern sub-zone.

Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish: Because of an overage in 2009, NOAA Fisheries Service published a rule adjusting the greater amberjack quota to 373,072 lb ww. Through September 15, 2010, 300,432 lb ww (80 percent) of the adjusted greater amberjack quota has been taken and 47,414 lb ww (45 percent) of the gray triggerfish quota has been taken.

#### 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 that have expired but are renewable. Valid permits as of September 29, 2010:

- 1,539 moratorium Gulf shrimp permits and 279 royal red shrimp endorsements. Of the original 1,933 shrimp moratorium permits, 271 have been terminated as of July 2010.

- 1,293 for-hire coastal pelagic moratorium permits; 39 historical captain permits
- 1,453 commercial king mackerel moratorium permits (includes South Atlantic)  
(22 commercial king mackerel gillnet)
- 1,664 commercial Spanish mackerel permits (includes South Atlantic)
- 1,261 for-hire reef fish moratorium permits; 38 historical captain permits
- 863 commercial reef fish moratorium permits (62 longline endorsements were issued)
- 196 commercial spiny lobster permits and 361 tailing permits (includes South Atlantic)

## PROTECTED RESOURCES

### Biological Opinions

- Completed a Biological Opinion for the Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers (COE) regarding the "Issuance of a Construction Permit to Escambia County for the Santa Rosa Inshore Artificial Reef Site," and its effects on Gulf Sturgeon Critical Habitat.
- Completed a Biological Opinion for the Mobile District COE regarding the "Construction of an Extension to, and Continued Operation of, the Washington Street Fishing Pier, and Boat Ramp in Hancock County, Mississippi," and its effects on Gulf Sturgeon, Gulf Sturgeon Critical Habitat, Smalltooth Sawfish, and listed sea turtles.
- Completed a Biological Opinion for the Mobile District COE regarding the "Construction of an Extension to, and Continued Operation of, the Clermont Harbor Fishing Pier in Hancock County, Mississippi," and its effects on Gulf Sturgeon, Gulf Sturgeon Critical Habitat, Smalltooth Sawfish, and listed sea turtles.
- Completed a Biological Opinion for the Mobile District COE regarding the "Mississippi Coastal Improvement Barrier Island Restoration Plan (Dredging and Disposal of Sand along West Ship Island in Harrison County, Mississippi," and its effects on Gulf Sturgeon Critical Habitat.
- Completed a Biological Opinion regarding "Hopper Dredging Associated with Sand Mining for the Pelican Island Segment of the Barataria Barrier Shoreline Restoration Project in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana," and its effects on Loggerheads, Kemp's Ridley, and Green Sea Turtles.
- Completed a Biological Opinion for the U.S. Air Force (Moody Air Force Base, Georgia), for the "Continued Combat Search and Rescue Training Operations within the Gulf of Mexico Water Training Area," and its effects on listed sea turtles.
- Completed a Biological Opinion for the U.S. Air Force (Patrick Air Force Base), Minerals Management Service, and the Jacksonville District COE regarding "Dredging and Beach Re-nourishment in Brevard County, Florida," and its effects on Green, Loggerhead, and Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles.

### Conservation Measures

- Completed the Mississippi Department of Natural Resources' Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 6 Cooperative Agreement.
- Completed the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' ESA Section 6 Cooperative Agreement.
- Completed the Texas Department of Natural Resources' ESA Section 6 Cooperative Agreement.
- Completed the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' ESA Section 6 Cooperative Agreement.

- Participated in meeting with Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC), NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, and NOAA's Office of General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation regarding dolphin feeding issues and strategies in Florida.
- Finalized and awarded the statement of work for Human Dimension survey in order to direct the development of future education/outreach efforts in Panama City, Florida, and other areas of the southeast United States with similar human/dolphin interactions.
- Coordinating with Mississippi/Alabama Sea Grant on soliciting a Request for Proposals for dolphin/human interaction research in the SER-based on outcomes from above workshop.
- FWC/NOAA Fisheries Service Protect Dolphin Meeting - participated in and planned 2 continued partnership meetings (December 2009 and May 2010) with state to ensure more consistent outreach and enforcement efforts.
- Planned, implemented, and executed four Dolphin SMART trainings in Key West, Ft. Myers, Sarasota, and Clearwater, Florida.
- Evaluated and recognized 5 operators for Dolphin SMART in SW FL - Gulf Coast.
- Implemented the Dolphin SMART "proud supporter" program in Alabama, Key West, and Central west Florida coast.
- Worked with Headquarters to implement seismic observer and data standards in the Gulf of Mexico seismic survey Environmental Impact Statement. Leading protected species observer working group and developed draft Protected Species Observers Standards report. Draft program report remains in SERO review.
- Gave presentation and led discussion on Improving the ESA Consultation Process for Federal Actions in St. Petersburg, Florida (March 3-4, 2010). Created Emergency consultations procedures, communication contacts, flow charts, and forms necessary for expedited coordination during emergency spill responses. Also adapted form and procedures to other emergencies. Coordination regarding updating protected species information and impact assessment for the Regional Response Team is ongoing.
- Continue to coordinate the Florida Blasting Working Group with NOAA Fisheries Service, FWC, COE, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Florida Department of Transportation to develop an interagency document on best management practices and common modeling for blasting projects in Florida.
- Established an 800 number for the Southeast Region (SER) Network - which will streamline efforts by the public to report marine mammals in distress and better facilitate calls for the Network.
- Ensured effective/successful response to out of habitat or entangled animals in Alabama and Texas.
- Provided leadership and direction for NOAA Fisheries Service response to Lake Pontchartrain (Louisiana) dolphins and how to effectively handle all associated issues verbally and in writing.
- Helped organize the Communication Workshop at the National Marine Mammal Stranding Network Meeting (National Conservation Training Center - April 5-9,2010) and participated in organizing committee planning calls for the Meeting.
- Implemented the Marine Mammal Authorization Program to over 4,000 fishermen, including those in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Characterized the Gulf of Mexico menhaden fishery and facilitated observer coverage.

### Deepwater Horizon BP (DWH/BP) oil Spill

- During oil spill response, completed 14 Statements of Work for contracts to enhance capacity for stranding in response to the DWH/BP Oil Spill.
- Served as lead NMFS wildlife branch representative for the St. Petersburg, then Florida Peninsula Command Center. Worked with FWC on Wildlife Operations plans.
- Helped coordinate all Southeast Region Stranding Network resources and response efforts to over 100 marine mammals. Worked with Headquarters and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) to ensure adequate NOAA Fisheries Service staffing for stranding program.
- Provided media, public, local outreach throughout the Northern Gulf regarding marine mammals and impacts of the oil spill and correct abundant misinformation. Coordinated extensively with the Joint Information Center, NOAA public affairs, and other offices. When possible was proactive in targeted communities (e.g., Orange Beach, Alabama, and Grand Isle, Louisiana). Compiled and cleared multiple talking points, fact sheets and Frequently Asked Questions. This also included multiple calls/emails with reporters, the SER Stranding Network, and the public.
- Completed and circulated several marine mammal protocols such as stranding protocols for SCAT teams, field necropsy, and carcass disposal protocols for the Stranding Network, and observer training for marine mammals.
- Wrote and cleared live dolphin intervention criteria, as well as general release guidelines for marine mammals live-stranded within the oil spill impact area.
- Prepared and compiled stranding related marine mammal emergency restoration proposals in preparation for Restoration initiatives.
- Wrote 7 proposals for National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funding to enhance capacity for stranding response in the Gulf Region.
- Compiled information for, reviewed, and edited multiple documents from the Wildlife Branch (hurricane contingency plans, transition plans, fact sheets).
- Participated in multiple calls and reviewed multiple documents related to visual health assessments and on-the-water monitoring of dolphins in the Perdido Bay Complex, Alabama.
- Coordinated with SEFSC, and Protected Resources Permits Division to ensure coordination, communication, collaboration among all marine mammal researchers/permit holders in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Provided staff to Unified command for extended periods (Houma, Louisiana, and Mobile, Alabama).
- Responded to Orange Beach, Alabama, community concerns regarding local dolphins by:
  - Conducting visual health assessments and monitoring of animals in Perdido Bay complex.
  - Community outreach, including participating in town hall meeting; meeting with elected officials, state, federal, and local constituents; and hosting several national and local media outlets during visual health assessments to provide NOAA's messages on response efforts.

### National Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)

- Participated in daily Wildlife Branch Conference Calls and weekly NRDA Marine Mammal Technical Working Group calls. Actively participated in NRDA meetings in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Silver Spring, Maryland.
- Facilitated Marine Mammal Working group to identify NRDA related needs.



- Developed and drafted several comprehensive NRDA proposals for post-release monitoring of rehabilitated dolphins within the oil spill impact area, and for enhancing capacity for stranding response in the northern Gulf of Mexico for the next 3 years.
- Worked with Marine Mammal Commission on Draft Strategic Science plan for marine mammals in the Gulf of Mexico - as part of the DWH/BP oil spill.

**Election of Officers:**

**D. Diaz** nominated Joey Shepard to be Chairman, and with no other nominations, Joey was reelected as Chairman. Dale Diaz was nominated for Vice Chairman and was elected unanimously.

**With no further business to discuss, J. Shepard adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.**

APPROVED BY:   
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

JOINT MEETING OF THE LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE, GULF COUNCIL LAW  
ENFORCEMENT ADVISORY PANEL, AND GULF STATES LAW ENFORCEMENT  
COMMITTEE

Embassy Suites Baton Rouge, Louisiana

October 28, 2010

**VOTING MEMBERS**

Harlon Pearce ..... Louisiana  
Kevin Anson (designee for Vernon Minton) ..... Alabama  
Carmen DeGeorge ..... USCG  
Matthew Lam ..... USCG  
Ed Sapp ..... Florida  
Larry Simpson ..... GSMFC  
Kay Williams ..... Mississippi

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

Larry Abele ..... Florida  
Doug Boyd ..... Texas  
Roy Crabtree ..... NMFS, SERO, St. Petersburg, Florida  
Myron Fischer (designee for Randy Pausina) ..... Louisiana  
Robert Gill ..... Florida  
John Greene, Jr. .... Alabama  
Joe Hendrix ..... Texas  
Damon McKnight ..... Louisiana  
William Perret (designee for William Walker) ..... Mississippi  
Robin Riechers ..... Texas  
Bob Shipp ..... Alabama  
William Teehan (designee for Nick Wiley) ..... Florida

**STAFF**

Steven Atran ..... Population Dynamics Statistician  
Steve Bortone ..... Executive Director  
Assane Diagne ..... Economist  
John Froeschke ..... Fishery Biologist  
Trish Kennedy ..... Administrative Assistant  
Shepherd Grimes ..... NOAA General Counsel  
Richard Leard ..... Deputy Executive Director  
Phyllis Miranda ..... Secretary  
Emily Muehlstein ..... Fisheries Outreach Specialist  
Charlene Ponce ..... Public Information Officer  
Cathy Readinger ..... Administrative Officer

**OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

Pamela Anderson ..... Panama City Boatmen's Association, FL

1 Matthew Andrews ..... Niceville, FL  
2 Tom Becker ..... Mississippi Charterboat Captain's Association, MS  
3 Rusty Bellard ..... Lafayette, LA  
4 Chris Blankenship ..... Dauphin Island, AL  
5 Steve Branstetter ..... NOAA Fisheries  
6 Glen Brooks ..... Gulf Fishermen's Association, FL  
7 James Bruce ..... Cut Off, LA  
8 Daryl Carpenter ..... Louisiana Charterboat Association, LA  
9 Jim Clements ..... Carrabelle, FL  
10 Mike Colby ..... Clearwater Commercial Marine Association, FL  
11 Dave Cupka ..... SAFMC  
12 Luke Decote ..... Moreauville, LA  
13 Jason Delacruz ..... Seminole, FL  
14 Troy Donaldson ..... Baton Rouge, LA  
15 Tracy Dunn ..... NOAA OLE  
16 Ben Fairey ..... Pensacola, FL  
17 Libby Fetherston ..... Ocean Conservancy, St. Petersburg, FL  
18 Troy Frady ..... Lillian, AL  
19 Sue Gerhart ..... NMFS  
20 Robert Goodrich ..... Austin, TX  
21 Buddy Guindon .....  
22 Chad Hanson ..... Pew Environmental Group, Crawfordville, FL  
23 Scott Hickman ..... League City, TX  
24 Tom Hilton ..... Arcola, TX  
25 Gary Jarvis ..... Destin, FL  
26 Michael Jennings ..... Lake Jackson, TX  
27 Bill Kelly ... Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Association, FL  
28 David Krebs ..... Destin, FL  
29 Alan Matherne ..... LSU Agricultural Center, Houma, LA  
30 Jeff Mayne ..... Baton Rouge, LA  
31 Terry Migaud .....  
32 Michael Miglini ..... Corpus Christi, TX  
33 Bart Niquet ..... Lynn Haven, FL  
34 Brett Norton ..... Tallahassee, FL  
35 Dennis O'Hern ..... FRA, St. Petersburg, FL  
36 Karen Raine ..... NOAA  
37 Tracy Redding ..... Bon Secour, AL  
38 James Richard ..... Hell Diver Spear Fishing, New Orleans, LA  
39 Hal Robbins ..... NOAA OLE  
40 Louis Rossignol ..... Kenner, LA  
41 Jim Smarr ..... RFA, Rockport, TX  
42 Bob Spaeth ..... SOFA, Madeira Beach, FL  
43 Bill Staff ..... Orange Beach, AL  
44 Walter Stone .....  
45 T.J. Tate ..... Reef Fish Shareholders Alliance, St. Augustine, FL  
46 Bobby Terrebonne ..... Grand Isle, LA  
47 Whitney Tome ..... Fisheries Forum  
48 Steve Tomeny ..... Golden Meadow, LA

1  
2 **LT COL JEFF MAYNE:** Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Mayne. I'm  
3 Assistant Chief of Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries and I'm the  
4 chair of the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel.  
5  
6 **MR. STEVE VANDERKOOY:** Steve VanderKooy, Gulf States Marine  
7 Fisheries Commission. I'm the Interjurisdictional Fisheries  
8 Program Coordinator.  
9  
10 **DR. LEARD:** Rick Leard, Gulf Council staff.  
11  
12 **MR. ROBIN RIECHERS:** Robin Riechers, Texas.  
13  
14 **MR. DOUG BOYD:** Doug Boyd, Texas.  
15  
16 **MR. JOE HENDRIX:** Joe Hendrix, Texas.  
17  
18 **MS. KAY WILLIAMS:** Kay Williams, Mississippi.  
19  
20 **DR. BONNIE PONWITH:** Bonnie Ponwith, NOAA Fisheries Service.  
21  
22 **MR. PHIL STEELE:** Phil Steele, NOAA Fisheries.  
23  
24 **DR. ROY CRABTREE:** Roy Crabtree, NOAA Fisheries.  
25  
26 **MR. SHEPHERD GRIMES:** Shepherd Grimes, NOAA General Counsel,  
27 Southeast Region.  
28  
29 **MS. KAREN RAINE:** Karen Raine, NOAA General Counsel for  
30 Enforcement and Litigation, Southeast Region.  
31  
32 **MR. TRACY DUNN:** Tracy Dunn, NOAA Fisheries Enforcement.  
33  
34 **MR. HAL ROBBINS:** Hal Robbins, Office of Law Enforcement. I'm  
35 the Special Agent in Charge of the Southeast Division.  
36  
37 **MAJOR CHRIS BLANKENSHIP:** Chris Blankenship, Chief Enforcement  
38 Officer from Alabama.  
39  
40 **MAJOR BRETT NORTON:** Brett Norton, Major, Florida Fish and  
41 Wildlife, and this is my last meeting. I'm being replaced by  
42 Captain Rod Batten, blue shirt in back of me. I've had a great  
43 time and it's been wonderful.  
44  
45 **MR. ROBERT GOODRICH:** Robert Goodrich with Texas Parks and  
46 Wildlife. I'm Chief of Fisheries Enforcement.  
47  
48 **MR. DAVID CUPKA:** David Cupka, Chairman of the South Atlantic

1 Bill Tucker ..... Dunedin, FL  
2 Russell Underwood ..... Lynn Haven, FL  
3 Steve VanderKooy ..... GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
4 David Walker ..... Andalusia, AL  
5 Donald Waters ..... Pensacola, FL  
6 Bryan Watts ..... Orange Beach, AL  
7 Wayne Werner ..... Alachua, FL  
8 Johnny Williams ..... Galveston, TX  
9 Bob Zales, II . Panama City Boatmen's Association, Panama City, FL

10 - - -  
11

12 The Joint Gulf Council Law Enforcement Committee, Gulf Council  
13 Law Enforcement Advisory Panel, and Gulf States Law Enforcement  
14 Committee convened in the Assembly/Caucus Room of the Embassy  
15 Suites, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Thursday morning, October 28,  
16 2010, and was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Chairman Harlon  
17 Pearce.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN HARLON PEARCE:** I appreciate everyone in law  
20 enforcement taking the time to come to this particular meeting.  
21 After attending some of the LEAP meetings, I could see that  
22 there was a disconnect between enforcement and the council. No  
23 matter how small or large it might be, I think it's very  
24 important that the council members and law enforcement are on  
25 the same page and that you guys understand where we're coming  
26 from as a council and we understand where you're coming from in  
27 law enforcement, because without the law enforcement working,  
28 everything we do is for naught and so we have to make sure it  
29 meshes.

30  
31 That's what this meeting is all about. Feel free to say what  
32 you would like to say as law enforcement officers or as council  
33 members. Let's ask our law enforcement what's going on and the  
34 Coast Guard, the same with you guys over there.

35  
36 We just went through this event in the Gulf that we're still  
37 sort of going through now. We'll discuss that a little bit, as  
38 to how law enforcement worked together to solve the problems in  
39 the Gulf with violators. With that, everyone has got the  
40 agenda. Any additions to the agenda?

41  
42 **DR. RICHARD LEARD:** Harlon, just so we can make sure that we've  
43 got the recording and Amanda can do that, maybe we ought to go  
44 around and introduce everybody, so that she gets a voice  
45 identification.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Good idea. I wanted to do that and I just  
48 flat forgot about it. Let's start on my left with Jeff.

1 Fishery Management Council.

2  
3 MR. DAMON MCKNIGHT: Damon McKnight, Louisiana.

4  
5 MR. KEVIN ANSON: Kevin Anson, Alabama.

6  
7 MR. JOHNNY GREENE: Johnny Greene, Alabama.

8  
9 DR. LARRY ABELE: Larry Abele, Florida.

10  
11 MR. ED SAPP: Ed Sapp, Florida.

12  
13 MR. BILL TEEHAN: Bill Teehan, Florida State representative.

14  
15 LCDR CARMEN DEGEORGE: Carmen DeGeorge, Coast Guard District 8,  
16 Office of Law Enforcement.

17  
18 LTJG MATTHEW LAM: Lieutenant JG Matt Lam, Coast Guard District  
19 7.

20  
21 MR. LARRY SIMPSON: Larry Simpson, Gulf States Marine Fisheries  
22 Commission.

23  
24 MR. CORKY PERRET: Corky Perret, Mississippi, and unfortunately,  
25 Colonel Walter "Tiny" Chatagner is not with us. He couldn't  
26 make it. Unlike the other Gulf States, we're real short of  
27 personnel and we all have to do more than some of the others,  
28 but we're trying to get one of our law enforcement types here  
29 and whether he's going to be able to make it or not -- They've  
30 got some things going on.

31  
32 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVE BORTONE: Steve Bortone, staff.

33  
34 DR. BOB SHIPP: Bob Shipp, Alabama.

35  
36 CHAIRMAN PEARCE: I'm Harlon Pearce from the Great State of  
37 Louisiana. Mr. Teehan, I want you to remember that now. It's  
38 good being last. Thank you, everyone.

39  
40 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

41  
42 Now we'll move for the Adoption of the Agenda. Any additions to  
43 the agenda or changes to the agenda by council members or  
44 enforcement officers? Hearing no changes, is there any  
45 opposition to the agenda as it is? Seeing no opposition, the  
46 agenda is adopted.

47  
48 DR. LEARD: I'm sorry, but we did have another item for at least

1 both the LEC and the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel and this is  
2 to elect their chairs. That would just be something that they  
3 would do and it wouldn't necessarily be part of the council, but  
4 they need to go ahead and do that at this meeting.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** So we can put that under Other Business at the  
7 end?

8  
9 **DR. LEARD:** Please.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Election of chair. With that addition to the  
12 agenda, any other additions? Hearing no additions, the agenda  
13 will be adopted.

14  
15 **APPROVAL OF THE GULF COUNCIL LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**

16  
17 Next, we'll go into the Approval of the Gulf Council Law  
18 Enforcement Committee Minutes. Any additions or changes to  
19 those minutes? If not, I would like to see a motion to adopt or  
20 approve.

21  
22 **MR. SAPP:** Motion to adopt.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Do we have a second to that? We've got a  
25 second. Any opposition to the approval of the Gulf Council  
26 minutes? Hearing none, the motion carries.

27  
28 **APPROVAL OF THE GULF COUNCIL LAW ENFORCEMENT ADVISORY PANEL**  
29 **MINUTES**

30  
31 Next is Approval of Gulf Council Law Enforcement Advisory Panel  
32 Minutes. Any objection to the minutes or any changes to the  
33 minutes? This would be the LEAP Committee. Hearing none, can I  
34 have a motion?

35  
36 **LT COL MAYNE:** Move approval.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** We have a motion by Jeff to approve it and is  
39 there a second from law enforcement? We have a second. Any  
40 opposition to the motion? Hearing none, the motion carries.

41  
42 **APPROVAL OF GULF STATES LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**

43  
44 Next is Approval of Gulf States Law Enforcement Committee  
45 Minutes. Any changes or objections or anything different in the  
46 minutes that we need to look at? If not, we've got a motion by  
47 Jeff to approve the minutes. We need a second. We have a  
48 second. Any opposition to the approval of the minutes? Hearing

1 none, they're approved.

2  
3 Next, we're going to go into the Review and Approval of the  
4 2011-2012 Operations Plan. That's Tab H, Number 5. I think  
5 it's a well done plan and so let's kind of take it one step at a  
6 time. Rick, are you going to take this one? Steve is going to  
7 do it? All right, Steve.

8  
9 **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE 2011-2012 OPERATIONS PLAN**

10  
11 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** We met in July in a joint work session between  
12 the LEAP and the commission's enforcement committee, revising  
13 this document. It was sent out to you at least a month ago for  
14 comment. The committee put this together.

15  
16 There are editorial changes noted in the draft that was provided  
17 in your briefing book. Highlighted in red are the things that  
18 changed. In some cases, behind them is language about why it  
19 changed. Things were moved around or deleted and there's also  
20 some strikethroughs.

21  
22 If there are any questions, I guess the committee will entertain  
23 trying to answer those and give a little more direction as to  
24 what the committee felt overall in the changes that they did  
25 make. There was a final goal that was added to the document as  
26 well, which included coordination of enforcement activities,  
27 specifically around the Deepwater Horizon. That's one major  
28 addition that you will find at the end of that ops plan. That's  
29 all I've got.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** How does the committee feel? Do you want us  
32 to go through the whole plan one section at a time and discuss  
33 it or maybe hit the highlights of the plan or especially the  
34 changes?

35  
36 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** I guess we can go ahead and hit some of the  
37 changes. If you've got that -- Again, it's Tab 5. Again, most  
38 of the things are moved around just a little bit. Under Goals  
39 and Objectives on page 1, the overall goal to provide  
40 professional law enforcement expertise throughout the rulemaking  
41 process, Objective 1, there was a few things that the tasks that  
42 were intended to be implemented were moved up.

43  
44 Some of them were eliminated and there were some that were  
45 actually never started and so they were replaced down under New  
46 Tasks, once again, rather than Continuing Tasks. The  
47 substantive things, Task 1 was replaced with a new task. Task 4  
48 was eliminated.



1  
2 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Steve, I would like to kind of go back up in  
3 that and part of that red in the Goals and Objectives, where it  
4 says provide an enforcement workshop for all new council and  
5 commission members, I want some discussion on that, because I  
6 think that's really important that everybody understands where  
7 we're coming from, both enforcement and council.

8  
9 Dr. Bortone is concerned about scheduling it and he would like  
10 to talk about that, but I think the real reason I wanted to have  
11 this meeting was to make sure that we're all on the same page  
12 and this sounds like a good way to get us all the same page and  
13 understand where we're coming from. Is there any discussion  
14 from council members or from enforcement members on this?

15  
16 **MR. SAPP:** I agree that I would sure like to hear some  
17 discussion. I would assume that if we decided we wanted to move  
18 forward with it that we would need a motion for the full council  
19 to act on and so I would like to have Steve, if you will,  
20 address what expenses might be involved. Are we prepared to  
21 deal with those or what other issues might we deal with if we  
22 decide that's where we want to go?

23  
24 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BORTONE:** First of all, I read over the  
25 document and sent it around to everyone and I received no  
26 comments directly. The only issue that I saw of a potential  
27 problem was the providing the workshop, because that would imply  
28 that we have to either incur a cost when we send people  
29 someplace or we have to make space on our calendar for it and  
30 just to let everybody be aware that that is -- It's not just a  
31 simple thing of saying you're going to provide it, because we  
32 have to be on the receiving end of this and allow for that.

33  
34 I'm only just pointing that out. You're right, Ed, that we'll  
35 have to figure out exactly how to implement that. I do believe  
36 we need some kind of orientation and I think that's important.  
37 It's just a question of what format that will be.

38  
39 One suggestion I had was to provide workshop materials and if  
40 that manifests itself in a formal meeting or just providing the  
41 materials annually, that would be one way to handle that.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you. Any other comments?

44  
45 **MR. SAPP:** A logical thing that occurs to me is that we just  
46 incorporate it into our new council member training that we do  
47 for new members every year anyway. I don't know what it would  
48 take in terms of hours or time, but that seems like the

1 reasonable way to do it.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Jeff, any comments?

4

5 **LT COL MAYNE:** One of the main focuses we want to do -- There's  
6 so many different disciplines that come together in managing our  
7 fisheries and a lot of people, whether it be the general public,  
8 the fishers, the users, lose sight of what we actually end up  
9 doing is managing people.

10

11 It's not necessarily the fisheries, but we have to affect  
12 behavior and to affect behavior, to make what all the  
13 disciplines come together to do, requires us in interaction with  
14 the public, whether it's education on the water or it's taking  
15 somebody to jail. We want to make sure that in this whole  
16 process that we don't lose sight of what we're doing. We're not  
17 managing the fishery. We're managing people and that's what  
18 makes this happen.

19

20 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Jeff. Any other enforcement at the  
21 front table or the back table?

22

23 **MR. ROBBINS:** I wanted to bring up -- A while back, Bob Gill  
24 called me and he had seen a presentation. I had given a  
25 document to Alan, our Acting Director, and it had to do with  
26 enforceability of regulations.

27

28 I told him I was surprised that he hadn't received a copy as a  
29 member of the council. I thought it was standard practice that  
30 everyone got one. It's a document that was developed by law  
31 enforcement and the Coast Guard and it's been updated in the  
32 last several years.

33

34 I called Dr. Bortone and he said no, to his knowledge it hadn't  
35 been distributed, but he would see that it was distributed and I  
36 forwarded him a copy. That's at least one thing I think we need  
37 to do with new members, make them understand while you can write  
38 a regulation, some are enforceable and some are not and some are  
39 somewhere in between.

40

41 **MR. SIMPSON:** Just expanding on Steve's comment, most of the  
42 time there's a split meeting between our Enforcement Committee  
43 and the council's Enforcement Committee. They're basically the  
44 same people and I think the benefit of the workshop is just as  
45 you've seen here, where these guys and gals can meet with  
46 council members to discuss various issues and ideas that they  
47 have.

48

1 I don't think a formal workshop is really necessarily what is  
2 called for in that plan. It could very well just be having  
3 their meetings concurrently with the council and not necessarily  
4 as it is formatted today, but at least in the same time and  
5 place, occasionally.

6  
7 We like that interchange and we at the commission have a report  
8 from them at every meeting and they are there and people  
9 intermingle with their meetings and so I kind of think that's --  
10 At least that's how we're going to handle it. If they ask for a  
11 specific workshop to discuss something, we certainly would do  
12 that and have done it in the past.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Larry, and I agree that you have a  
15 good forum for that at the Gulf States. We don't have that  
16 forum here at the council and I think it's important that the  
17 council members and law enforcement know our problems.

18  
19 **MS. WILLIAMS:** I'm not on your committee, but it seems to me  
20 they do need to come and meet and interact however they choose  
21 to set something up with us and not just for new members.  
22 There's issues that come up that they need to talk to all of us  
23 about, but another thing that might be helpful is to have some  
24 type of education outreach so that you can meet with industry,  
25 in case they have questions, and just have that -- I don't know  
26 if you would call it more -- I wouldn't say friendly, because  
27 law enforcement is friendly to our industry, but it just gives  
28 them a mechanism to come and ask questions and for you all to  
29 let them know your side, where you're coming from, and perhaps  
30 how they can also help you do your job.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** I agree. I know as part of our certification  
33 program in Louisiana on seafood that there will be an  
34 educational component and part of that educational component is  
35 going to be laws. Jeff will be actively involved in that,  
36 because there is a disconnect there and we want to try to make  
37 sure that our constituents, as well as everyone around the  
38 table, understands what those laws are and that enforcement  
39 understands the laws that we're trying to make around this table  
40 and how they can enforce those laws.

41  
42 **MAJOR NORTON:** When we proposed this, and I've been going to the  
43 South Atlantic and to the Gulf side, we've been meeting with the  
44 South Atlantic Council and it's important. Some of the outside  
45 activities, you shake hands and you talk to people and you've  
46 got to have that face-to-face interaction with the council  
47 members.

1 They've got to understand that law enforcement -- We are the  
2 good guys. We are trying to do a job here, but we're working  
3 with industry, to your point, ma'am.

4  
5 The other thing that's important is the documentation that Hal  
6 brought up, making sure that you have the documents that we  
7 produce, because they're very important. There are certain  
8 things that we are unable to enforce and there are other things  
9 that we can and your actions should be based on what we can and  
10 cannot enforce or it should be brought into the thought process,  
11 at least. I think it's important that we do meet face-to-face  
12 at some point with new council members and with the council.

13  
14 **MR. SAPP:** First off, a point of information. Kay, you're on  
15 this committee. I'm real interested, as a council member, in  
16 pursuing this and I would question how it's done at the South  
17 Atlantic Council. Do you guys plan the meetings so that you  
18 meet with them when their council is scheduled or are they  
19 outside the regular council routine?

20  
21 **MAJOR NORTON:** We don't meet at every council meeting, but we  
22 meet at alternating council meetings and so we are there when  
23 the council is meeting and then it allows you that after hours  
24 time around the council table, those types of times.

25  
26 I think what we're talking about in this document takes it one  
27 step further. You have an orientation packet, I'm sure, that a  
28 new council member goes through. Sit down with one of us and  
29 let us explain to you what we are, what the Law Enforcement AP  
30 is, and how can we help you and how can you help us.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Ed, if nothing else, a listening session, like  
33 we do in the evenings, with enforcement here, with industry and  
34 us around, might be -- That's worked very well for Roy and I  
35 think that might could work as well.

36  
37 We hold a listening session at least once during the council  
38 meeting so that our constituents can ask questions of Roy and  
39 the other members of the council about issues that are before  
40 the council. We may be able to do the same thing with a  
41 listening session, just as a thought, with enforcement and  
42 industry.

43  
44 **MS. WILLIAMS:** To Ed's comment, no, I'm not on Law Enforcement,  
45 but the Chair is going to make a recommendation that I be on Law  
46 Enforcement. I just don't want people to think that I didn't  
47 know I was supposed to be on the committee.

1 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** I think she's scheduled for 2011.  
2  
3 **MR. TEEHAN:** I'm not on the committee, but I just wanted to pile  
4 on and echo that the input of law enforcement is always  
5 important in making decisions. I know that we are here to  
6 protect the resource and we don't necessarily want to be making  
7 decisions strictly based on the difficulty of enforcement, but  
8 nonetheless, I think it's a very important factor and I think  
9 it's very important to get that input at the time that we're  
10 making decisions.  
11  
12 I've had several people come up to me the last couple of days  
13 with different propositions that would require, for at least my  
14 better understanding of it, to talk with law enforcement about  
15 the feasibilities of it. I think any increase in activities and  
16 interactions we can have is great.  
17  
18 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** That's good and, Ed, the good thing is it's  
19 just you and I that can vote and so we can do whatever the heck  
20 we want, I think. We're safe, I think.  
21  
22 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** If I may, we actually, on page 2, under the New  
23 Task Number 1, sort of laid out, at least in that meeting, a  
24 proposed schedule, to have both committees still meet in  
25 conjunction with the commission meeting twice a year, but then  
26 make two additional meetings a year in conjunction with the  
27 council.  
28  
29 Financially, I don't know how that will work, but that was the  
30 committee's indication and then in the council meetings where  
31 they were not scheduled to meet, at least the representative of  
32 the LEAP for that state where it's being hosted would certainly  
33 attend the meeting and provide input or return input back to the  
34 committee.  
35  
36 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** I, like Ed and Bill, think it's necessary. I  
37 think we need more input and that's why we're holding this  
38 meeting, so that the council members have a chance to speak  
39 about it. Even if you're not on this committee, I want to hear  
40 from you, because we're going to go to the full council and vote  
41 on whatever we do here anyway. Let me know how you feel.  
42  
43 I would like to also know how law enforcement feels that you  
44 worked together during this oil event and how does our members  
45 of the council feel about how law enforcement worked together or  
46 worked at all during the event? Jeff, you might want to start  
47 that.  
48

1 **LT COL MAYNE:** From the State of Louisiana, one of our main  
2 focuses, in addition to assisting with the boom deployment and  
3 with making sure that people stayed out of closed areas, was  
4 making sure that product that was harvested in the closed areas  
5 did not enter the market.

6  
7 We wanted to try to maintain the integrity of the seafood that  
8 was being harvested. We worked, enforcing closures and  
9 enforcing marine maritime security issues, a total of about  
10 86,000 hours to date for BP work, which was tremendous. We  
11 rotated every officer we had in the state through the entire  
12 event, working forty-hour shifts. It was a tremendous  
13 undertaking and we're still dealing with it now.

14  
15 We're dealing with many aspects of fraud that was committed on  
16 the backside of it and so that's a new undertaking and, of  
17 course, we're dealing with reimbursement for work and dealing  
18 with those kinds of issues, to try to get funding back from BP  
19 from the damages that were incurred on behalf of the state.

20  
21 We worked together with our adjoining states and with the  
22 federal agencies very well. It took everybody to continue to  
23 deal with this and to date, we still want to make sure the  
24 integrity of our seafood is safe and the consumers are safe.

25  
26 **MR. PERRET:** Jeff, thanks. There are many instances of fraud.  
27 We've got fraud no matter what, after Katrina and so on and so  
28 forth, but when you say many instances, is there really that  
29 many fraud things happening? I'm sure there's some, but  
30 compared to the whole, as a percent, I'm sure it's a low  
31 percentage overall, I'm guessing.

32  
33 **LT COL MAYNE:** If you compare -- I don't know exactly how to  
34 compare to fraud committed after Katrina, because the types of  
35 fraud committed after Katrina didn't necessarily involve our  
36 workings. We're seeing, at least in our business, there's a  
37 higher level. A lot of it is going to be ongoing and uncovered  
38 in the next few years and so it's hard to kind of measure, based  
39 on this is kind of a new game for us.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Jeff. Just listening to that,  
42 we're putting responsibilities on you as a council and you're  
43 having responsibilities on you with what's going on in these  
44 particular events and I think that now is the time for you guys,  
45 for the events, to be proactive in planning and as a council to  
46 be proactive in planning. Tracy and Carmen, let me hear from  
47 you guys as to how things worked for you all and how you all  
48 worked together during the event.

1  
2 **MR. DUNN:** We had to turn to everybody to help out and everybody  
3 had their own problems with state boundaries and the Coast Guard  
4 with its primary mission and so it was a very, very difficult  
5 task to coordinate of fisheries enforcement effort, but  
6 everybody did pretty much what they could do, I think.

7  
8 As always, we work well together as a team, taking into account  
9 the state has its primary responsibility and the Coast Guard has  
10 its primary responsibility. We have very, very limited  
11 resources that we can bring to the table, besides good  
12 investigators, but in times of the oil spill, it's really the  
13 at-sea assets that are going to rule the day.

14  
15 **LCDR DEGEORGE:** I think initially, I think we worked very well  
16 together. I think NOAA was key in providing a lot of the  
17 information and intelligence as to who was possibly violating  
18 the fisheries closed area.

19  
20 Just looking at some of the stats I have here, I think, to date,  
21 we've interdicted twenty-two vessels illegally shrimping in the  
22 area and returned 200,000 pounds of shrimp to sea. That's to  
23 date. A lot of that information, a lot of those enforcement  
24 actions, is based on either intelligence we received from our  
25 staffs or from NOAA.

26  
27 I think we worked very well together and I think the key was  
28 just getting information to us so we could act on it. Just to  
29 comment a little bit about what the Coast Guard did during this  
30 event, we pulled in assets from all over the Coast Guard. We  
31 had ships that came from the west coast and we had ships that  
32 came from as far away as Maine and New England just to respond  
33 to this.

34  
35 We brought personnel from all over the Coast Guard. We had as  
36 many as -- I lost track of how many cutters we actually out  
37 there at any given time, but more than fifteen. Now, some of  
38 those were dedicated to skimming operations, but we're a multi-  
39 mission service and so vessels that were out there skimming were  
40 also looking for potential violators on the fisheries side.

41  
42 We had continuous flights going up. We actually, to this day,  
43 still have flights going up every day and taking a look at the  
44 zone. We have cutters out there patrolling and so could it have  
45 been better? It was an unprecedented event and so we didn't  
46 have a plan that we pulled off the shelf that said if this  
47 happens, this is how we're going to work together.

1 I think we learned a lot from the event. I think there's always  
2 ways to improve it, but I think it worked well, given the way it  
3 unfolded.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Some of my personal observations, first off,  
6 is I think that communications need to be joint communications  
7 with all groups, so that when a major bust happens, everybody  
8 comes out at the same time, because you're working together.

9  
10 I believe that PR is very important and what goes out to the  
11 press is very important and that needs to be done in a unified  
12 effort, both from the states, from NOAA, and from the Coast  
13 Guard as well. The other thing I've found is I think that we  
14 clearly need -- Everybody needs more people, but I think that we  
15 need more agents in the field with NOAA and there's no doubt  
16 about that.

17  
18 **MR. TEEHAN:** I think everybody that we've mentioned so far did  
19 an exemplary job and I just want to express my thanks and  
20 gratitude to the Coast Guard for their cooperation at the state  
21 level. We never had a problem getting Florida state  
22 representatives and resource people onboard flights or anything  
23 else that could be accommodated and so I really did appreciate  
24 that kind of cooperation.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** I think that's very important. I think that  
27 as far as -- The Coast Guard was offshore as Jeff is inshore and  
28 it's very important that a Coast Guard vessel would have a NOAA  
29 officer at some point on it, because you don't really understand  
30 the laws as well as they understand it when it comes to  
31 fisheries, in some cases. I think that we need to figure out  
32 how to do a better job of that joint enforcement.

33  
34 **LCDR DEGEORGE:** I guess to that point, several times we did take  
35 up some NOAA agents in some aircraft, but all of our boarding  
36 officers offshore are highly trained in federal fisheries law  
37 enforcement and the closed area offshore was actually fairly  
38 easy to enforce.

39  
40 Once you spot a vessel and they're actively fishing, we have  
41 very specific guidance on how to handle that and we have very  
42 specific procedures and so it was actually -- I don't want to  
43 say it was easy, but if you spotted somewhere in there fishing,  
44 it was pretty much an open and shut case.

45  
46 We did take some NOAA agents up several times on some aircraft  
47 flights, just to get their perspective as the closed area was  
48 changing a little bit. I wouldn't say that they're not trained



1 offshore. Obviously the rules are complex, but this is actually  
2 -- Closed areas are very easy to enforce. If it's closed, you  
3 can't be in there and you can't be fishing.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Poor choice of words on my part and I do  
6 appreciate all your efforts in keeping any product from the  
7 closed areas out of the marketplace, because that was very  
8 important.

9  
10 **MR. PERRET:** Carmen, I'll address this to you, but any of the  
11 law enforcement personnel may want to respond also. I know it  
12 was difficult, confusing, for all of us involved with lines and  
13 closures and so on and so I can just imagine what it must have  
14 been like for members of the fishing public, because things were  
15 changing almost daily and that sort of thing.

16  
17 As a whole though, do you think compliance by our constituents,  
18 the fishing industry, was good, considering the number of  
19 changes that were going on and how rapidly those changes were  
20 taking place?

21  
22 **LCDR DEGEORGE:** In my opinion, I think it was pretty good. I  
23 think it was interesting. You could see from the reports from  
24 the field when the zone would change or the closure would  
25 expand, et cetera, you could see people actually leaving the  
26 zone.

27  
28 A lot of times what we would do is when we would get the report  
29 from NOAA about an anticipated change in the zone, we would get  
30 a cutter out there and start warning the fishing fleet and  
31 saying, hey, look you need to be out of here by 18:00, et  
32 cetera.

33  
34 I think overall compliance was pretty good. There were several  
35 people out there. I think most of these vessels, and I  
36 mentioned the twenty-two that we interdicted out there, when we  
37 would ask them if they knew it was closed, they said yes, we  
38 knew it was closed, which was kind of interesting.

39  
40 **MAJOR NORTON:** Just a couple of points of reference. One, you  
41 made the comment about the Coast Guard being offshore and it was  
42 also state assets that were offshore. At points, were a hundred  
43 or 110 miles offshore.

44  
45 We were checking VOO. I don't know that the council knew that,  
46 but that was part of -- We had gotten some intel, actually  
47 through Louisiana, that some of the VOOs may be fishing at  
48 night, when they got done VOO-ing during the day. So we were

1 checking VOOs, to see any evidence that any fishing was taking  
2 place onboard those vessels.

3  
4 The other point of reference is that NOAA had sent down somebody  
5 from D.C. into our state emergency operations center. I manned  
6 the operations center for a couple of weeks and it was very  
7 beneficial to us to have somebody from Secretary Lubchenco's  
8 office in our EOC.

9  
10 You had a direct point of reference when there was an issue that  
11 came up, whether it be from a biological standpoint or an  
12 enforcement standpoint, to go in and talk to that person. That  
13 was very helpful to us.

14  
15 As far as coordination, I think the coordination was very good  
16 across the states and between NOAA. We had agents aboard our  
17 boats as well in Florida. At any one time, we had a hundred  
18 officers from Pensacola all the way east.

19  
20 We did tear up a lot of equipment, which we're dealing with  
21 right now, and I'm sure Jeff is dealing with it as well, stained  
22 hulls, cracked hulls, ATVs on the beach that are completely  
23 destroyed from the amount of work. We're working through our  
24 state through BP to try to get some reimbursement on that. It  
25 definitely was a lot of work on everybody's part.

26  
27 One of the things we did differently in Florida is we took it  
28 out of our operational budget and now are getting reimbursement  
29 back to our operational budget.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you for that. As you said, the  
32 coordination was good, but if it wasn't, if there were any  
33 holes, now is the time to fix it. Now is the time to talk about  
34 how you would work into the future and I think in a lot of  
35 cases, after an event like this, the real work just begins on  
36 figuring out how to be very proactive and where we go from  
37 there.

38  
39 **LT COL MAYNE:** Just to echo his statements, we worked, of those  
40 86,000 hours -- One of the difficulties we had is we have a  
41 joint enforcement agreement. I didn't want to use our joint  
42 enforcement agreement to enforce closures in federal waters and  
43 so were able to actually charge those hours to BP and we worked  
44 a total of about 14,000 hours in federal waters doing those  
45 closure enforcement activities and I think we had ninety-five  
46 commercial citations and twenty-nine recreational in federal  
47 waters. It was a challenging time, but we were able to do it  
48 and overcome it.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Jeff, and I believe enforcement did  
3 a wonderful job during this whole event. You all worked very  
4 hard and we didn't have problems that we might have had if we  
5 weren't as well together. Steve, do you want to keep going?  
6  
7 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** Sure. Most of that first goal, again, is  
8 related to communication between the council, the commission,  
9 and the enforcement committees. When you get into Objectives  
10 1.2 and following, through page 4 --  
11  
12 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Let me hold you up one second. Ed, did you  
13 want to make any motions on the communication?  
14  
15 **MR. SAPP:** I wasn't quite sure how to proceed. I would sure  
16 like to see us pursue having some kind of joint meeting and  
17 maybe in conjunction with an upcoming council meeting. I don't  
18 know if it's appropriate to go through all the presentation and  
19 then see if we've got a list of recommendations or motions we  
20 want to make or what's your pleasure?  
21  
22 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** While we're hitting them one at a time, while  
23 it's fresh in our minds, if you've got a motion, I would sure  
24 like to think about it.  
25  
26 **LCDR DEGEORGE:** With regards to the extra meetings, I would just  
27 propose that, from a Coast Guard point of view, it would be  
28 helpful if we combine them with the actual council meeting, like  
29 if we do what we talked about, maybe a night time round session,  
30 et cetera. It's just with our travel schedule and the many  
31 meetings we go to, it's just hard to add another special meeting  
32 in just for that.  
33  
34 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Sounds like a personal problem, to me.  
35  
36 **MR. SAPP:** If I was going to put it in the form of a motion, I  
37 would do it just about exactly the way Carmen suggested. I make  
38 a motion that we recommend to full council that at either the  
39 February or April meeting that we schedule a round table  
40 workshop to include council members and members of law  
41 enforcement.  
42  
43 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** I will second that. Any discussion?  
44  
45 **MS. WILLIAMS:** I know Law Enforcement used to meet and they met  
46 just like all of our other APs, with us around the table. This  
47 round table you're talking about at night, after five o'clock, I  
48 would rather see it scheduled along with our regular meetings,

1 when we normally meet, because usually by five o'clock, we've  
2 went through so much that most of us are kind of trying to still  
3 take it all in. If that's possible, I would rather do it that  
4 way.

5  
6 **MR. SAPP:** I would be comfortable with that. I'll ask Steve --  
7 I know you probably haven't planned agendas that far in advance.  
8 Do you think that we would have time within our regular council  
9 meetings to allow for something like this, over the next two  
10 meetings at some point?

11  
12 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BORTONE:** With some lead time, yes, I think  
13 we can accomplish that. One suggestion is if it's just  
14 orientation for new members, we could combine that with our  
15 current orientation, but remember our current orientation  
16 doesn't always take place at a council meeting. It may be other  
17 than that and then that adds to some problems. We can try to  
18 accommodate that if it's just once a year.

19  
20 **MR. PERRET:** I'm not a member on your committee, but Ed and  
21 Harlon, this might be a way to do it. In the Draft Operations  
22 Plan, I see Task 1 under New Tasks, and this is a  
23 recommendation. It's in red and it's not been adopted yet.

24  
25 The LEC/LEAP will attempt to meet quarterly in conjunction with  
26 the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, spring and annual  
27 meetings, and I guess that's spring and fall meeting, and two  
28 Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council meetings per year.  
29 That would be two of ours and two of Larry's meetings.

30  
31 I think the gentleman from Florida said you all meet with the  
32 South Atlantic every other meeting and they have four a year and  
33 is that right? Four council meetings?

34  
35 **MAJOR NORTON:** That's correct.

36  
37 **MR. PERRET:** They're meeting with that group two a year and it  
38 would be the same number as that. That's just a suggestion.  
39 This is the language in the Operations Plan.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** By the way, Corky, we have a very select  
42 committee here and I don't know that we would even let you on.

43  
44 **MR. PERRET:** I chaired it at one time and we let you neophytes  
45 have a turn every now and then.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** We'll handle it. Go ahead, Ed.

48

1 **MR. SAPP:** I guess my idea was that we have a first one and it  
2 would obviously include all the new council members as well as  
3 the existing ones and at that point, maybe we could have that as  
4 one of the discussion items, is how we ought to schedule in the  
5 future and with what regularity those meetings would occur and  
6 whether it would involve just the committee members or whether  
7 they would involve full council. I think those are things we  
8 could all hash out at the first session, when we finally get it  
9 scheduled.

10  
11 Actually, the way that motion is worded up there, it doesn't  
12 address the issue as to whether it should be an evening session  
13 or if we can schedule it during the regular council hours. I  
14 would suggest that we leave that to staff's discretion, as to  
15 how we might do that.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Ed. We have a motion and a second  
18 on the floor. **All in favor say aye. It passes.** Let's keep  
19 going, Steve.

20  
21 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** Along with the additional possibility of  
22 meetings and enhanced communication with the council staff, as  
23 well as the commission staff, the remaining tasks and objectives  
24 under that first gula are specifically related to improving  
25 communications.

26  
27 On page 3, you'll see some of the new tasks, 1, 2, and 3 at the  
28 top of that page. If there's going to be more staff effort on  
29 the part of the council, if Rick is going to be unable to  
30 perhaps dedicate more time to the enforcement panel, they would  
31 like to see someone else designated, purely because they think  
32 it's going to require more time. They want to be able to get  
33 more material in advance and be able to provide comment along  
34 the process, rather than provide comment once things have been  
35 approved.

36  
37 You'll see additional related things. We're going to continue  
38 to do things supporting enforcement on the water. For example,  
39 at the commission we do the pocket guide now every year for  
40 officers. We're going to continue to do that.

41  
42 There will be more communication within the state agencies. The  
43 LEAP members and the LEC members will actually talk to their  
44 representatives, to their council members and to their  
45 commissioners, before and after scheduled meetings that they  
46 might not necessarily attend and try and get more of a heads-up  
47 as to what's coming and provide comment ahead of time rather  
48 than after the fact. That is the primary focus of Goal 1. I

1 don't know if you want to address Goal 1 by itself or --  
2  
3 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** That's Task 1, Request a staff member, is that  
4 where I'm at?  
5  
6 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** Yes, part and parcel to that is that Task 1  
7 under Objective 1.2.  
8  
9 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** He's looking for some comments on that new  
10 task, Task 1, Request a staff member from the council be  
11 assigned as a liaison as a primary duty to attend all LEAP  
12 meetings for improved communication and coordination. Any  
13 comments from the council members?  
14  
15 **MR. SAPP:** Rick, do you want to provide some input to us? Do we  
16 need assignment of a different staff person or does this work in  
17 with your workload?  
18  
19 **DR. LEARD:** Unless they're unhappy with me, I'm perfectly  
20 willing to do it. I've been dealing with them for over twenty  
21 years, when I was in Steve's place at Gulf States and then for  
22 almost the last fifteen years. I'm happy with them if they're  
23 happy with me.  
24  
25 **MS. WILLIAMS:** I just had a question. Does the council  
26 committee chair meet with law enforcement separate from here?  
27  
28 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Can you say that again? I didn't hear you.  
29  
30 **MS. WILLIAMS:** Does the chairman of the committee meet with law  
31 enforcement separate from the regular meetings? I don't know  
32 how you all normally do it.  
33  
34 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** I know I have attended some of the LEAP  
35 meetings in the past and so yes, that should happen.  
36  
37 **MS. WILLIAMS:** That was just a question and thank you.  
38  
39 **MR. SAPP:** I went to one of the LEAP meetings when it was in New  
40 Orleans and I'm not the chairman and so I think we're probably  
41 all invited to attend and welcome to.  
42  
43 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you. Let's move on, Steve.  
44  
45 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** That pretty much covers Goal 1. Again, that's  
46 primarily related to communications and building and maintaining  
47 a relationship between the council and the commission. Moving  
48 on then to Goal 2, Develop and implement effective educational

1 programs, outreach has always been a big component of what the  
2 enforcement community does.

3

4 Jeff pointed it out and several others, that these are the good  
5 guys and they need to interact with the public and be able to  
6 provide the information so that there isn't questions and  
7 confusion about regulations and how enforcement works.

8

9 As part of the continuing of Goal 2, which has been in the  
10 previous Operations Plans, Objective 2.1 is to improve  
11 community-oriented policing programs. One of the bullets that  
12 they've added or modified slightly is that last bullet under  
13 that overall objective, which is to routinely provide reporting  
14 of state and federal enforcement outreach activities to the  
15 commission and to the council.

16

17 One of the ways that we are going to handle this at the  
18 commission level, in addition to the fact that we do have some  
19 new commissioners, is to provide occasionally in the enforcement  
20 report, which goes before the full commission, sort of a primer  
21 on some of they're doing.

22

23 We're talking about -- I've already talked to Jeff about putting  
24 together another JEA kind of 101 course for our commissioners,  
25 give an overview of what the JEA program is and where it's been  
26 historically and what it's currently doing and give kind of an  
27 overview of each state and what are their activities and what  
28 kind of hours and what kind of contact have they had and what  
29 are some of the bigger cases and what were the results of those  
30 cases.

31

32 That would kind of highlight how well JEAs work and also  
33 highlight the need for continuing support of those JEAs. At the  
34 commission level, we intend to carry on and keep doing those  
35 sorts of things occasionally in their committee report. We're  
36 looking to do that as part of the outreach, at least within the  
37 commission.

38

39 Under Continuing Tasks, you see two additional red ones, 5 and  
40 6. We've attempted to do, in the past, a little bit of  
41 documenting what kind of outreach activities our enforcement  
42 guys are involved with.

43

44 We have put together bullet lists from each state and now that  
45 the commission has an outreach committee and I believe the  
46 council is doing more of an outreach effort, we're sharing that  
47 information, along with that committee, to try and enhance and  
48 find other opportunities, whether they be boat shows, fishing

1 rodeos, kids events, to try and get the message out as to what  
2 our enforcement folks are actually doing. That goes with Task  
3 6, to identify other forms of fishery education and public  
4 outreach. Under Objective 2.2, promoting Gulf-wide information  
5 programs --

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Let me slow you up a little bit, Steve. On  
8 Task 6, identify other forms of fishery education and public  
9 outreach, one of the things that we're going to be doing with  
10 Jeff in Louisiana, as part of our certification program, is  
11 developing an educational component for our fishermen, to let  
12 them better understand the laws in our state.

13  
14 I think, Jeff, it would be great if we did it with the feds as  
15 well, brought them into that same educational component, so that  
16 people know where they're going. We're going to try to take a  
17 proactive approach to understanding our laws, as well as other  
18 things, in Louisiana as part of our fishery.

19  
20 **DR. LEARD:** Just maybe to kind of back up a little bit, but also  
21 to kind of go along with this, we had requested what we were  
22 talking about a minute ago, that we have pretty much a person  
23 with the council that their primary duty is to work with law  
24 enforcement and whatnot.

25  
26 I don't think we've got enough staff that we can have one person  
27 really dedicated to doing that as their primary duty, but I  
28 think what we can have is a more coordinated effort of working  
29 between me and Steve with law enforcement and with their  
30 outreach and education and then I can bring Charlene and Emily  
31 into the process, too.

32  
33 I believe that it may take us a little while to work through  
34 that, but I believe that we can come up with a plan as to how we  
35 can meet what they want to do, at least between the Gulf States  
36 office and our office and with the personnel that we've got that  
37 can do those things.

38  
39 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BORTONE:** I concur with Rick and I've just  
40 spoken with Charlene and I will co-assign, along with Rick, one  
41 of our outreach people to participate as well and help that  
42 effort, because I think it's important not just for the outreach  
43 effort you're talking about, but the larger outreach that we're  
44 trying to do with fisheries throughout the Gulf.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you. Steve, are you ready to keep going  
47 or have we got comments?  
48



1 **MAJOR NORTON:** The topic of that item, the reason we wanted that  
2 item in there was because not that Rick is not doing a good job,  
3 but we want to make sure that all of the upcoming issues that  
4 the council is addressing that may have law enforcement impact  
5 that we know about.

6  
7 That way, we can evaluate and make comment to at least -- I'm  
8 not going to say you guys don't put out a lot of paper, but you  
9 put out a lot of paper and trying to keep track of the stuff  
10 that's maybe going to cross a law enforcement realm, it would be  
11 helpful for us to try to have somebody kind of feeding that  
12 stuff to us.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Haven't you heard? Corky has made us all go  
15 electronic and so we don't have paper anymore.

16  
17 **MAJOR NORTON:** When I say paper, I mean electronic.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** I'm just kidding with Corky. You're right  
20 that you need to know ahead of time and not after the fact and  
21 that's important and that's why this meeting is here today, so  
22 we begin that thought process and keep going. Go ahead, Steve.

23  
24 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** Again, going back to Gulf-Wide Information  
25 Programs, you'll see not a lot of the objectives, the bullets,  
26 have changed much. Continuing Tasks, these are all things that  
27 are currently ongoing and the enforcement folks are actually in  
28 the process of doing.

29  
30 One of the new tasks that had been identified was the revision  
31 to the law summary. Again, we've done that and so that's being  
32 removed, but on the next page, page 6, you'll see a new Task 1.  
33 This goes back to some of the council activities, looking at a  
34 Smartphone application for getting on-the-water fishery  
35 regulations and some fish identification.

36  
37 Prior to us having that workshop, I was unaware that the council  
38 was actually working on something like that and once we got back  
39 to the office, I realized that you all were actually already  
40 making significant progress and I think Larry brought it up at  
41 the last meeting, that that was something if state waters  
42 regulations could at some point be integrated into that. It  
43 doesn't make sense to have two separate applications for  
44 fishermen who are fishing the same areas in the same day.

45  
46 **MR. SAPP:** Before we get off the subject, when you mention  
47 having some kind of web-based information, just a quick thing  
48 that occurs to me is that it would be real easy if Charlene can

1 arrange for us to have a button on our website that links to  
2 whatever it is that you guys put together that's informational,  
3 just a quick and easy.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you. Any other comments? All right,  
6 Steve.

7  
8 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** Objective 2.3 is Enhancing the Awareness of  
9 Federal and State Prosecution to Successful Adjudication of  
10 Natural Resource Regulations. Some minor editorial things were  
11 made in that objective.

12  
13 A new task was added that the state members should develop a  
14 forum, in conjunction with the council meetings, to invite legal  
15 representatives from NOAA Fisheries, OLE, the Defense and  
16 Prosecution Committee, local federal judges, and the public to  
17 discuss and understand how fisheries enforcement occurs and how  
18 fisheries cases are built.

19  
20 This was kind of more of a theoretical discussion that it would  
21 be wonderful for us to be able to bring in some of our local  
22 judges and lawyers and educate them as to how the process works  
23 on the water in enforcement.

24  
25 By the time it gets to an actual case, sometimes there is  
26 confusion and there is uncertainty on the part of the judicial  
27 system. In the discussion, it was not 100 percent sure if this  
28 could even actually be done, but it was suggested that at the  
29 state level that some of the states already are doing sort of  
30 informal invitation Q&A type situations, I imagine something  
31 like what happened last night, for the legal community, to help  
32 them better understand what the problems are and how confusion  
33 in the legal process can hinder what it is that we're trying to  
34 do with sustaining fisheries.

35  
36 **MR. PERRET:** Indeed a worthwhile task and an admirable goal. We  
37 tried this once years ago with state judges and these state  
38 enforcement officials are well aware of the issues dealing with  
39 raw shellfish or shellfish harvest, because raw shellfish are  
40 consumed raw, the importance of coming from waters that are open  
41 for safe harvest.

42  
43 The mistake we made was starting in New York and we met with  
44 some judges and while shellfish was very important, the issues  
45 they face at the local level in New York City, shellfish wasn't  
46 at the top of their list, but I think it's a worthwhile attempt  
47 to do it.

48

1 Now, my suggestions are, if you want to do it at the state  
2 level, is do it in an election year. Number two, do it at a  
3 social where you've got -- Jeff has got some good cooks in his  
4 organization. Invite them to a social and talk law enforcement.

5  
6 How you deal with federal judges that are appointed for life,  
7 I'm not sure, but it's worth trying to do, but these guys and  
8 gals have a heck of a lot on their plate, but I think it's  
9 certainly worth trying.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Corky. Any comments from Karen at  
12 NOAA or Hal or Tracy? Okay. Any other comments on that issue?  
13 All right, Steve, keep going.

14  
15 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** That pretty much covers Goal 2. If there's no  
16 other questions, Goal 3 is specifically addressing cooperative  
17 law enforcement partnerships between agencies and between the  
18 states and the federal components.

19  
20 If you look, the objectives here are to -- The first one is to  
21 maintain CEAs, joint enforcement agreements, and other  
22 reciprocal agreements between states. Most of that is  
23 continuing. There were a couple of changes on the next page,  
24 page 7.

25  
26 Two items that were identified in the previous two-year  
27 operations plan as new tasks have been accomplished and have  
28 been moved up to what you see in red there, Task 7 and 8, which  
29 is the routine reporting on JEA activities to the commission and  
30 hopefully to the council and investigating and developing  
31 officer sharing programs. That seems to be happening more and  
32 more and so we moved that up and that's going to be a continuing  
33 item under that.

34  
35 One new task that was discussed was to create sort of a  
36 recognition program, perhaps each year selecting a state and  
37 identifying an officer who within the JEA program provided  
38 exceptional expertise and performance, as sort of just a pat on  
39 the back.

40  
41 A lot of the JEA activities sort of -- It may not be recognized  
42 quite as much and it was suggested that this might just be a  
43 nice way to encourage the officers that their efforts are  
44 appreciated and so you see that as New Task Number 1. Is there  
45 any discussion on that?

46  
47 **MR. PERRET:** I don't know if each state has it. I know two do  
48 that I'm familiar with, the Outstanding Agent Award. Does a JEA

1 enforcement officer -- Is he qualified for that award?

2  
3 **LT COL MAYNE:** Yes, that would be included in that overall work  
4 activity for our agent of the year, but one of the things we've  
5 done on a state level is we also issue an enforcement officer of  
6 the year or DWI enforcement officer of the year and that's  
7 special recognition in the areas of expertise where you have  
8 those guys who have spent a lot of time in those areas.

9  
10 It helps promote competitiveness between the officers and it's not  
11 always about writing tickets or the most citations. It could be  
12 about being involved with their community and making sure their  
13 community is in compliance and that community is good. I think  
14 those kinds of areas of recognition actually provide a real good  
15 benefit.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Any other comments?

18  
19 **MR. GOODRICH:** I brought that up when we were in our meeting  
20 because, as you know, many groups recognize officers for their  
21 special efforts and I felt like the JEA especially -- A lot of  
22 those get passed on, those cases that the officers work on, and  
23 they go on to the federal level and they never really hear about  
24 what happens and there's a lot of special effort they put forth  
25 and recognizing them for it keeps them interested and keeps them  
26 into it and that's part of this program.

27  
28 What we do in Texas, of course, is we recognize their special  
29 efforts for special cases, whether it's a regional meeting or a  
30 district meeting of officers. We'll give them special awards  
31 for cases they've made and recognize them for their efforts, but  
32 I think what we're looking at here is to take each state and to  
33 have an input to maybe have their officer of the year and then  
34 get that recognized before the council and maybe even bring them  
35 up here and bring them before the council and recognize their  
36 efforts.

37  
38 **MR. PERRET:** The gentleman from Texas got ahead of me. I was  
39 going to suggest, if you people thought it was the way to do it,  
40 perhaps, if we pursue this, each state that has their JEA  
41 officer of the year and do it at one of the council meetings,  
42 where the five individuals would be present.

43  
44 We don't need an answer to that today, but if that's the way you  
45 all think it should be done, I'm certain we could probably  
46 accommodate that.

47  
48 **MS. RAINE:** Just a little point of clarification. When cases do

1 come to our office and we're working on them, we do certainly  
2 let the officers involved know the outcomes.

3  
4 **MR. SIMPSON:** On a little bit different subject, I want to  
5 compliment the law enforcement family in the Gulf of Mexico.  
6 They're kind of modest, but in some of the past efforts that  
7 we've had that tried everyone's soul and patience, and I'm  
8 talking about hurricanes and activities like that, it was a good  
9 deal of sharing and volunteering from one state to the other.

10  
11 While I'm complimenting these guys, in this latest issue with  
12 the oil disaster stuff, there was also a state-to-state  
13 volunteering of helping and do you need equipment or do you need  
14 boats or do you need people.

15  
16 That's heartwarming to me and it's just a quick note that Texas  
17 wasn't hit as bad and they made a lot of those comments, can we  
18 help you guys, and sitting in all those conference calls every  
19 week, that made me feel good anyway. Both biological staff and  
20 administrative staff, as well as enforcement, have done good  
21 things, I think, about this.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Larry. Any other comments?

24  
25 **MR. CUPKA:** I just wanted to let you know that the South  
26 Atlantic Council is currently in the process of creating an  
27 annual law enforcement award that we will present each year at  
28 our September meeting, which is our main annual meeting.

29  
30 It's not only we will recognize officers in the field, but it  
31 could be a state officer, a federal officer, a prosecutor,  
32 anybody involved in the enforcement process and not just the  
33 agents out in the field writing tickets and all. We are  
34 implementing that now and working with our Law Enforcement AP to  
35 develop guidelines and how that individual will be selected and  
36 those sorts of things.

37  
38 We're moving ahead on that and also while I have the mic, if I  
39 may, I wanted to tell you that the South Atlantic Council -- We  
40 work very hard at maintaining a beneficial relationship not only  
41 with NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, but also the Coast Guard  
42 and the state agencies in our part of the world, in the South  
43 Atlantic.

44  
45 We realize and recognize, as has been pointed out already, that  
46 clearly that law enforcement is a critical component of the  
47 fisheries management process and at a recent Law Enforcement AP  
48 meeting that our council had, there was a lot of discussion

1 about the JEA program.

2  
3 We recognize how important this program is and how important it  
4 has been for us to do our jobs to manage fisheries and all and  
5 yet, there's a lot of concern right now, particularly because  
6 the state budgets are being impacted so far, and we don't  
7 believe it's critically impacted the efforts of state and  
8 federal enforcement up to this point, but we think as states are  
9 facing more severe budget cuts and whatnot that eventually it is  
10 going to impact our enforcement ability.

11  
12 I think one reason it hasn't so far is because the states have  
13 actually been putting in more work than is even required under  
14 their JEAs, but with budget cuts and all, I don't think they're  
15 going to be able to continue this.

16  
17 Our council is very concerned about this impact of budget cuts  
18 and all on the JEA program and just earlier this week, we send a  
19 letter to Dr. Lubchenco urging that the federal government  
20 consider increasing funding for the JEA program to support it,  
21 because it is so critical to everything that we're all trying to  
22 do.

23  
24 That's an action the South Atlantic Council has taken to try and  
25 ensure that this program not only continues, but that they have  
26 the necessary resources to do a job that's getting harder all  
27 the time, as our regulations become more complex and are having  
28 more and more impacts on people. That's an action that we've  
29 taken, hopefully to try and encourage some more support for the  
30 JEA program at the national level.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you and when you get the components of  
33 that award that you're giving out, kind of keep us involved at  
34 the council, because that sounds like a great thing we can do.  
35 I know in Louisiana that Jeff is going to run for Governor so he  
36 can make sure his department doesn't get cut. I think that's  
37 how he's going to handle it. Is that right, Jeff?

38  
39 **LT COL MAYNE:** One day maybe.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** One day maybe. Okay. Any other comments?  
42 Let's keep going, Steve.

43  
44 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** Under Objective 3.2, it specifically is  
45 identifying shared information for joint programs that support  
46 state law enforcement, especially from the federal side, and  
47 there were some minor edits to that, to provide joint law  
48 enforcement training for state officers. That will give more

1 cross training between OLE and the state agencies and Coast  
2 Guard.

3  
4 Those continuing tasks have remained the same. There was one  
5 new task, which was on page 8, Task Number 1. It's to develop  
6 additional shared experience training between the states and  
7 OLE.

8  
9 I'm not sure I can necessarily address what those items might  
10 be, but there were some opportunities for additional training,  
11 cross training, and they wanted to be able to explore those and  
12 find those and begin to implement any of those cross training  
13 programs. Did you guys have anything to add to that?

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Any comments?

16  
17 **MR. GOODRICH:** I think part of that was if we could get more  
18 active of some of the agents to work closer with our officers  
19 and train them, especially when regulations change, because at  
20 the federal level, sometimes those change, like on the IFQ and  
21 some other things that happen, and we want to be sure that we're  
22 looking at it the same way, because we're out there to enforce  
23 it.

24  
25 I think that it needs more people in the field to interact with  
26 our officers and that's kind of one of those, but the training  
27 aspect would be putting them together and going over some of the  
28 things and making sure that everyone is on the same page.

29  
30 **MR. SIMPSON:** I remember one historical training that was done  
31 together and Jeff probably is the only one here that remembers  
32 it, when Waller took you all out in Florida to that nighttime  
33 interdiction thing. He created a scenario, the Florida guys  
34 did, of a very realistic belligerent person and it scared the  
35 heck out of some people, because they were firing guns and all  
36 that kind of stuff. That's an old one, but it's been done in  
37 the past and I think some of that needs to continue.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** That wasn't Jeff, the belligerent one, was it?  
40 Let's keep going.

41  
42 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** The last two objectives under that goal really  
43 haven't changed. The objectives remain the same. The tasks  
44 involved remain the same. There are no new tasks under those.  
45 You can see they're all continuing.

46  
47 That brings us then to Goal 4, which is promote regulations to  
48 protect and enhance the health and sustainability of the

1 ecosystem. Under those objectives for 4.1, to share information  
2 to ensure the highest quality of biological data to support  
3 ecosystem management, there was a slight editorial change to the  
4 second bullet, to look at the negative impacts of regulations  
5 and management strategies to living marine ecosystems.

6  
7 Part of that, you'll see under Continuing Tasks. What was  
8 thought to be a continuing task, we realized was never really  
9 fully implemented and so we've moved that back to a new task.  
10 It's something that we, over the next couple of years, want to  
11 try and improve upon and that is specifically to invite NOAA  
12 Fisheries managers and scientists to discuss how law enforcement  
13 strategies and statistics are incorporated into the modeling  
14 process.

15  
16 Where does things like compliance and compliance rates fit into  
17 the overall scheme of the management scenarios that are being  
18 proposed and what data might be available from the enhancement  
19 section to improve perhaps the intended goal of the management  
20 strategies that are produced?

21  
22 That pretty much covers that goal. I think the intent was to  
23 invite folks to some of our meetings to make presentations and  
24 to have sort of a Q&A to be able to figure out where does  
25 enforcement fit when managing some of these fisheries.

26  
27 **MR. PERRET:** With that explanation, does that mean the second  
28 bullet under 4.1 is still in?

29  
30 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** Yes.

31  
32 **MR. PERRET:** It seems to me we want this group's input prior to  
33 a regulation or strategy and so my suggestion would be put  
34 "proposed" in front of "regulations". We don't want to hear  
35 about them when it's too late. We want to hear about them on  
36 the front end and so if indeed, from an enforcement standpoint,  
37 you guys see a problem, we want to be able to address it before  
38 we put something in that's going to hurt us all.

39  
40 Secondly, on that bullet, rather than just identify the negative  
41 impacts, why don't we just identify impacts? We want to hear if  
42 there's any good ones as well as any bad ones, but we want to  
43 hear it on the proposed thing that we're looking at and not  
44 after it's done. That's a suggested change.

45  
46 **LT COL MAYNE:** Corky, I agree with you on the proposed.  
47 However, if there are existing regulations out there, we want to  
48 be able to identify that.



1  
2 **MR. PERRET:** Absolutely. You're right. I didn't mean to take  
3 away from those that are already in, but also on any that are  
4 being proposed.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Any other comments?

7  
8 **MAJOR NORTON:** One issue that just came up in the South Atlantic  
9 that was very interesting with the South Atlantic closure for  
10 red snapper is we had a long discussion at the last LEAP about  
11 compliance.

12  
13 It's very important that you understand what we think compliance  
14 is so you understand how it really works and we had a scientist  
15 on the call and we were trying to explain to them what we know  
16 as compliance and what you may perceive compliance to be and in  
17 that particular case, it potentially closed the fishery, because  
18 of the compliance rates that they were using.

19  
20 Trying to get to an accurate number on that is going to be a  
21 very interesting thing and I think that's something that  
22 whatever comes from the South Atlantic probably needs to get  
23 over to the Gulf, so you guys can compare notes on the outcome  
24 of that discussion. It will be very important as the future  
25 rolls on.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you. Any other comments? Then let's  
28 move on.

29  
30 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** As a point of clarification for staff then,  
31 that second bullet, as I understand it now, will read: Identify  
32 impacts of proposed and existing regulations and management  
33 strategies to living marine resources. Is that correct?

34  
35 **MR. PERRET:** Current and proposed. It's just wordsmithing.

36  
37 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** Okay. Then moving on, Goal Number 5 is to  
38 protect the American consumer. That's been a goal that was  
39 established a couple of iterations ago in this document and  
40 considering the recent activities in the Gulf around the  
41 Deepwater Horizon, there was a little bit of need to direct this  
42 towards public health as well.

43  
44 You'll see that the actual goal has changed slightly, to ensure  
45 the American consumer of receiving a safe, legal, and properly  
46 identified aquatic product, regardless of where harvested.  
47 Again, it's trying to get at the seafood safety side of it.

48

1 Objective 5.1 is slightly edited. We added "domestic and  
2 imported fisheries and aquatic products", trying to encompass  
3 the potential for more aquaculture products showing up in the  
4 market as well.

5  
6 Those bullets did not change, with the exception of one  
7 additional under that overall objective, which was to protect  
8 the public from tainted and unsafe aquatic products, from  
9 whatever the source is.

10  
11 Continuing Tasks, obviously that first one we've completed. We  
12 have worked with the U.S. Customs agents. There was an issue a  
13 couple of years ago and it was addressed in the last Operations  
14 Plan that has since been identified and taken care of and so  
15 that one has been marked as completed and not continuing  
16 anymore.

17  
18 Other than that, there were no other substantive changes in that  
19 overall goal. Again, the primary focus is getting back to  
20 including public health as well in the seafood safety.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Any comments on public health and seafood  
23 safety, because that definitely is a buzz word.

24  
25 **MR. TEEHAN:** I'm not on your committee, but I did serve on quite  
26 a few of the committees that dealt with seafood safety and  
27 sampling and so forth and I'm curious, because there's a point  
28 of confusion after a product is landed, as to where  
29 jurisdictions of one agency stops and one agency begins, with  
30 the FDA and with enforcement and with Departments of Agriculture  
31 in different states.

32  
33 Do you all feel that you have a good rapport and good  
34 communication with some of those other agencies at the state  
35 level and at the federal level?

36  
37 **LT COL MAYNE:** I know in Louisiana -- I guess part of the point  
38 of confusion is different states operate in different ways and  
39 so we have jurisdiction over different areas and work with our  
40 DHH and with our Agriculture Department. I think each one of  
41 the states deals with the same issue, but I know in Louisiana we  
42 have a very good working relationship with our sister agencies  
43 to ensure that product safety.

44  
45 Just kind of going with what was said about the JEA programs and  
46 funding, the funding level for JEAs has been relatively  
47 consistent since 2001 and everybody knows what has happened to  
48 our expenses and what it requires to do the work. The actual

1 work effort is not at the same level that it was even in the  
2 earlier years of the JEA.

3  
4 States are strapped thin and so much of the states' and the  
5 nation's economy are based on the seafood industry and the  
6 regulations that we enforce, whether it be recreational or  
7 commercial fisheries.

8  
9 We need to ensure that the compliance with these regulations and  
10 the information that's collected from this information is done  
11 accurately and it's important that the JEA funding continue on  
12 and it helps those working relationships with those sister  
13 agencies also.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Bill, not just that, but I think part of our  
16 job after this event is to get all the regulatory agencies on  
17 the same page with our state agencies and we're working actively  
18 right now to have a regulatory summit with FDA, EPA, and NOAA  
19 people to sit down with our state agencies to revisit protocols  
20 used before this event and what we're going to do after the  
21 event and to try to make things move a little quicker than they  
22 have in the past.

23  
24 One situation where we've had FDA, which their protocol for  
25 testing was seven to ten days, we've got them down to forty-  
26 eight hours now and so we want to keep pushing those issues, so  
27 that we can move into the electronic age and get away from where  
28 we were and so we're working on that.

29  
30 **MR. TEEHAN:** That's good to hear, because I have heard so many  
31 times in the past several months that we don't do that and so  
32 who does?

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** You're correct that we have to look at it.

35  
36 **MAJOR BLANKENSHIP:** Trying to find some bright spot in the whole  
37 oil disaster, in Alabama in particular, is it really fostered a  
38 communication among some of the agencies that we may not have  
39 dealt with. We had cursory relationships with, but not really  
40 good working relationships with.

41  
42 We dealt with our Department of Public Health on a coastal  
43 level, but to deal with the administration in Montgomery, to  
44 really get a better idea of what they do and what their  
45 capabilities are -- We worked with our Department of  
46 Agriculture, who we never have worked with very well in the  
47 past, and I didn't realize a lot of the things that they did in  
48 food testing, particularly seafood testing.

1  
2 Then working with the FDA and some other organizations that  
3 we've worked with with oysters, but actually being involved in  
4 the conference calls that we had and communicating on a if not  
5 daily, at least a weekly basis for several months, it has forged  
6 a lot of relationships that I think are going to be very  
7 beneficial for all of us as we move down the road, to be able to  
8 have a better handle on the seafood safety for our state and the  
9 Gulf as a whole.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Just, for instance, the FDA protocol right now  
12 on consumption per person a year on oysters is ten pounds. The  
13 real consumption is a quarter pound and so they're basing all  
14 their statistics on a ten-pound figure, which we're going to  
15 revisit and get back to the real world with that. There's a lot  
16 of that staff that's going to go on and there's no doubt about  
17 that.

18  
19 **MR. PERRET:** I certainly agree with Goal 5. We want to do  
20 everything we can for the American consumer, but we had a  
21 gentleman here this week that a large part of his sales are  
22 foreign sales and we talk about domestic and we talk about  
23 imported, but, Steve, some kind of way if you can slip some  
24 language in there just to ensure the American consumer, as well  
25 as -- Domestic seafood is important, but we want to make sure  
26 our international receivers know they're protected from our  
27 domestic seafood. All of our seafood harvested in the United  
28 States of America is safe, no matter where it's consumed,  
29 because we do have a sizable international market for seafood.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Any other comments? Steve, are you ready?

32  
33 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** You're going to allow us to do a little staff  
34 wordsmithing on that then, just to make that correction? Okay.  
35 Continuing on then, Goal Number 6 is always a good one, obtain  
36 funds to aid state and federal law enforcement agencies. It  
37 probably needs to say more like maintain and enhance funding.

38  
39 6.1 has not changed, with the exception of a task which was  
40 identified in the previous operations plan as something they  
41 wanted to accomplish and apparently has been done. There was a  
42 lot of communication breakdowns and problems noted across  
43 agencies and such after Katrina and some of the other  
44 hurricanes.

45  
46 There was an effort made to provide cross communication that  
47 would work in all states at all times. It seems to have worked  
48 well, but that is a continuing task now, Number 6, to pursue

1 additional funding for communication systems and to improve  
2 communication ability and compatibility between agencies under  
3 all conditions.

4  
5 In the case of Deepwater Horizon, communication didn't seem to  
6 be a problem, because there weren't power outages and other  
7 issues that we had during the Katrina and following storms.

8  
9 What was Task 2 now becomes Task Number 1 and under Objective  
10 6.2, to seek long-term, dedicated source of funding  
11 appropriations for the JEA program to support regulatory  
12 compliance initiatives in the Gulf of Mexico, Jeff and a few  
13 others have already mentioned this.

14  
15 We have continued to support JEAs through the writing of letters  
16 and asking for additional funding. It has been level funded.  
17 Task 4 specifically requests the council and commission to send  
18 a letter to the appropriate federal legislative delegates to  
19 help identify and secure long-term funding appropriations in  
20 support of JEAs. That is something that we did prior to this  
21 operations plan, but it's something we need to continue to do.  
22 It's been removed from new tasks.

23  
24 There is an additional new task you see there on page 12, Task  
25 Number 2. It's to request the council to identify increased  
26 funding and identify data needs for enforcement to generate  
27 enforcement statistics for use in ecosystem-based management.  
28 This goes back to Objective 4.1 and also to the need for  
29 improved JEA software.

30  
31 It's an ongoing battle to get that system really working.  
32 There's been a lot of progress made, but they've listed that as  
33 a new task.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** All right. I've got some questions.

36  
37 **MR. SAPP:** Task 4 sounds scarily like you're suggesting that the  
38 Gulf of Mexico Council tiptoe into lobbying. Maybe Dr. Bortone  
39 and/or Mr. Grimes can comment on that.

40  
41 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BORTONE:** We are expressly prohibited from  
42 doing that and cannot participate in lobbying. Along those  
43 lines, the next line, Task 2, says to identify increased funding  
44 and I'm not sure, if I were to be given that task, what that  
45 means.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Comments? Any discussion on that?  
48

1 **LT COL MAYNE:** It could be, for example, if, similar to the  
2 Coast Guard, we have cooperative missions. A port security  
3 grant may provide additional funding or assets to let us get a  
4 boat that enhances our cooperative mission and we share that  
5 information with the other states or federal agencies.

6  
7 If there's other funding sources to the state or somebody finds  
8 or discovers that can enhance our overall mission and core  
9 responsibilities, we want to make sure that those things are  
10 included.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Any other comments? Moving on, Steve.

13  
14 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** Objective 6.3 is to obtain adequate funding for  
15 the strategic planning process and greater representation of the  
16 LEC and the LEAP at both the commission and the council  
17 meetings. That bullet is slightly edited to reflect Objective  
18 1.1, which was to increase the amount of combined meeting time  
19 for the LEAP and the LEC, in conjunction with the commission and  
20 the council meetings.

21  
22 Obviously that's going to take more money on both agencies parts  
23 and so that's one of those things that they've identified, to  
24 match the schedule that they would like to see in the future.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** All right. Any comments? Keep going.

27  
28 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** Finally, Goal Number 7, as I indicated before,  
29 with the recent BP disaster, Goal Number 7 is brand new and it  
30 is specifically stated that the five states will work together  
31 for the short-term response and long-term recovery from the  
32 Deepwater Horizon disaster.

33  
34 There's a few bullets there identifying some of the things that  
35 they feel need to be done and several tasks, one task, which  
36 obviously is brand new. I guess ultimately what they would like  
37 to do is have some sort of a review, post-disaster, on how the  
38 responses were and to develop a comprehensive response plan in  
39 preparation for any future disasters similar to this.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Any comments? Move on.

42  
43 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** That's it. That's all the changes. For what  
44 it's worth, we did take this up at the commission meeting last  
45 week in Clearwater Beach, Florida, and on Wednesday, the  
46 commission approved this plan as written. There are minor  
47 editorial changes and there are a number of commission members  
48 here who are also council members and I don't know how that will

1 play out, but it is currently approved, as of last week, by the  
2 commission.

3

4 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you. I think a job well done. I think  
5 it was written and I think we had some good comments today about  
6 what we needed to add to or delete from or whatever and, Ed, I  
7 think we need an approval of this plan to bring to full council.  
8 It's just you and me.

9

10 **MR. SAPP:** Move approval of the report as presented.

11

12 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** I'll second it.

13

14 **DR. SHIPP:** There are some items in there regarding the lobbying  
15 aspect that would probably have to be removed before the full  
16 council approves it and so I think your motion would be  
17 contingent on the appropriate modifications as it applied to  
18 lobbying restrictions.

19

20 **DR. LEARD:** There were a couple of other I guess just kind of  
21 agreed upon modifications and staff editorial license and then  
22 that first motion that you made about recommending to the full  
23 council that the February and April -- Those meetings or that we  
24 pretty much try to schedule a meeting sometime in that  
25 timeframe.

26

27 Like Dr. Shipp, I think probably the approval should be approve  
28 it with the modifications as necessary and appropriate and as  
29 approved. Obviously this is an operations plan for the Law  
30 Enforcement Committee of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries  
31 Commission as well as the council.

32

33 There's some of these things that the commission can do, like  
34 Dr. Shipp mentioned, which is lobbying for JEA money and  
35 whatnot, and the council can't. It doesn't matter really to me,  
36 I don't think, that those things are in there. It's just that  
37 the council can't do it, but the commission can.

38

39 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Shep, any comment on that? That's unusual.  
40 You've been real quiet. Ed, do you want to add that? Okay.  
41 **All in favor say aye. The motion passes.** Do you have a  
42 comment?

43

44 **MR. SAPP:** This has been great and I think we're moving this in  
45 the right direction and I just want to make sure Dr. Bortone and  
46 Rick, have you got everything that you feel like you need as you  
47 work to put together this first meeting that we're going to  
48 have?

1  
2 What my hope is is that in addition to having a round table  
3 discussion and handshaking and open lines of communication that  
4 we also, as part of the meeting, establish what frequency and  
5 what format the meetings will take in the future. I would hope  
6 that can be part of what we agenda when we do that.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Good comment, Ed. We're past this section and  
9 we'll move into Joint Enforcement Agreement Discussion. We're  
10 going to take a ten-minute break and then we'll be back.

11  
12 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** We're on the Joint Enforcement Agreements and  
15 that's for everyone to discuss. Joint Enforcement Agreements,  
16 does everyone on the council understand what a joint enforcement  
17 agreement is? If not, ask questions and I think we need a good  
18 discussion on what's going on with the joint enforcement  
19 agreements and how they've helped all law enforcement agencies  
20 work and how we can improve them in the future.

21  
22 **MR. TEEHAN:** I did have one question on the last page of this  
23 document we just went over. There's a collection of law  
24 enforcement badges. Are we supposed to pick our favorite out or  
25 what's the story with these? I vote for Florida, even though  
26 it's got a scary similarity to Alabama.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Do you just want a badge so you can give out  
29 tickets? Is that what it's all about?

30  
31 **MR. TEEHAN:** I would like a gun too, if I could get one.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** We'll never give you a gun. That would be a  
34 mistake. The monkey is enough.

35  
36 **JOINT ENFORCEMENT AGREEMENTS**

37  
38 **MR. ROBBINS:** I was just going to give a little overview on the  
39 JEA. We have a nationwide program, but in the Southeast, we  
40 have an agreement with eight states and two territories, the  
41 Virgin Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

42  
43 Quite frankly, we don't provide a great deal of funding for all  
44 the work that they do, but without them, it's very difficult for  
45 us to take care of the EEZ. We have somewhere near 350,000  
46 square miles of EEZ that we're responsible for and I have a  
47 staff of thirty-four sworn agents.



1 We have six supervisors and so we have twenty-eight special  
2 agents that are responsible for the waters out to 200 miles from  
3 North Carolina down to the Caribbean and up the Gulf and then  
4 down to the border at Brownsville, Texas.

5  
6 Each agent is roughly responsible for about 500 coastal miles  
7 and so it can make it quite challenging and without these  
8 special relationships with state partners and the territories,  
9 it would be virtually impossible for us to do our job.

10  
11 I've been with the organization six-and-a-half years and we've  
12 not gained a single person within the Southeast Division,  
13 despite all these new programs. We have two catch share  
14 programs that have come into being, any number of amendments,  
15 and yet, we have not grown. Without additional resources from  
16 our state partners, there's just no way we could keep up.

17  
18 That brings me to another matter, if you would indulge me for  
19 just a minute. We've been asked to solicit input for  
20 priorities. In the past, what we've done is met with the  
21 Regional Administrator, the Coast Guard, and General Counsel on  
22 a quarterly basis, but Dr. Lubchenco has decided that she wants  
23 this to be more far reaching and so we've been asked to ask the  
24 councils, the NGOs, our state partners, anyone that has an  
25 interest in establishing priorities for law enforcement, to give  
26 that us.

27  
28 I would be a focal point for the Southeast and we'll be setting  
29 priorities for all three of our councils. As you know, the  
30 Southeast Division is very unique, in that we have three  
31 councils, the Gulf Council, South Atlantic Council, and  
32 Caribbean Council.

33  
34 We'll be establishing priorities for all three of those. We'll  
35 be working on that from now through January and we would welcome  
36 your input on anything that you feel that we should be working  
37 on, but we would also ask that when you provide us your ideas  
38 for priorities that you would include any rationale for setting  
39 that as a priority.

40  
41 In other words, if it happens to be an endangered species or a  
42 fish that's overfished or undergoing overfishing, those are  
43 things that would certainly justify these things being a  
44 priority.

45  
46 Now, the reason I bring it up within the JEA is these are things  
47 that we're going to be looking for our JEA partners to assist us  
48 with and so it won't be just something that OLE would be

1 responsible for.

2  
3 Once these are established for each one of the three councils,  
4 those will be passed on up to the administration and then NOAA  
5 will decide whether or not those in fact indeed are worthy of  
6 being priorities. Then I'm sure we'll have a number of  
7 different reports we'll have to do to show what our efforts have  
8 been and also what progress we might have made in those areas.

9  
10 Again, I would welcome -- I've already spoken at the Gulf  
11 Commission meeting to our state partners, but I would like to  
12 ask that any of you that have any ideas, please provide them to  
13 me and, again, we would need some kind of rationale and  
14 justification on why those should be priorities.

15  
16 **LT COL MAYNE:** Hal, I know from a state perspective and what  
17 everybody thinks about developing priorities and NOAA obviously  
18 has priorities within NOAA and they want to focus those  
19 priorities or have enforcement focus certain priorities in  
20 certain areas, but one unique thing about law enforcement, and  
21 this is part of learning how we work, is when we do work and we  
22 go out, we focus on everything.

23  
24 When we board a boat, whether it's a shrimp boat or a  
25 recreational tuna fishing boat, we're looking for any type of  
26 violation. An hour worked in contacts made on any vessel is  
27 basically you're getting an all-encompassing -- You're getting  
28 all that work, no matter what it is.

29  
30 One of the things from a state perspective, at least from  
31 Louisiana's perspective and I know some of the other states that  
32 we have to be careful with, is I don't want to get in a  
33 situation where we cause our guys to say, all right, I want you  
34 to go work red snapper and then they are just looking at red  
35 snapper vessels.

36  
37 When we get on any vessel or do any inspection or any dockside  
38 inspection or any seafood dealer inspection, we're looking at  
39 everything and our priority is everything that exists under the  
40 sun.

41  
42 I don't want to get in a situation where we're putting blinders  
43 on our enforcement guys or we end up creating false information  
44 by saying we're working so many TED enforcement hours or so many  
45 red snapper hours or so many highly migratory species hours when  
46 we're working contacts and we're working all those things at the  
47 same time.

48

1 I just want to make that comment for the record, for when you  
2 report that information on those priorities. We're working  
3 commercial fisheries and we're working recreational fisheries  
4 and we're working charterboat fisheries and we're looking for  
5 any type of violation that we come across and it's hard for a  
6 state enforcement guy to segregate those into hours.

7  
8 We can segregate that into broad categories and we can report  
9 out accurately how many contacts we made and how many citations  
10 we made and how many people were engaged in this particular type  
11 of fishery, but it's hard for us to schedule our guys to go work  
12 a particular thing when they're looking for everything at the  
13 same time.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Jeff, and our Gulf Council members  
16 are exempt from all those inspections, right? No? How are the  
17 states paid under the JEA programs? I'm curious, so the council  
18 knows.

19  
20 **MR. DUNN:** Are you talking about how we allocate that funding?

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Yes, I'm just curious.

23  
24 **MR. DUNN:** I wish I had somebody from Headquarters here. They  
25 control the allocation initially. We get a funding amount for  
26 the nation and they look at commercial landings in each state  
27 and they look at the number of dealers, the number of recreation  
28 trips, and this is all coming out of NOAA Statistics, and then  
29 they apply a formula to come up with an initial amount and then  
30 they sent it to the Southeast or to each division and then we  
31 look at our needs and play around with those numbers a little  
32 bit and then a final JEA funding amount goes out.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** So it's not based on how many hours the agents  
35 work or anything like that, but it's just based on one set  
36 dollar figure?

37  
38 **MR. DUNN:** We have an allocation of funding we give and that's  
39 followed up with an operations plan, based on the needs of the  
40 Division at the time.

41  
42 **MAJOR NORTON:** I think if you were to talk to all five states,  
43 this would be a common theme. We work way more than the number  
44 of hours that are required to get the amount of money that we  
45 get and that number of hours is probably not a true accurate  
46 representation of how many hours the guys are really working.

47  
48 I can tell you in my state, having 721 officers, trying to get

1 them to all march to the same tone and fill out the piece of  
2 paper has been a difficult thing for me. We try, but I know  
3 there's guys out there that are working JEA every day and I'm  
4 not getting that piece of paper to go into a database that goes  
5 up to NOAA.

6  
7 One of the interesting things with this program, and I use the  
8 analogy because I came from the boating safety side, is with our  
9 grant from the Coast Guard to do boating safety for the nation  
10 that we split amongst the fifty states, we're talking about \$100  
11 million.

12  
13 The State of Florida receives about \$11 million to do boating  
14 safety, check life jackets. We get about \$1 million to check  
15 fish. Checking fish is much more difficult than checking life  
16 jackets and I don't understand the difference, why that funding  
17 level is so off.

18  
19 I'll use the South Atlantic for an example. Some of the MPAs  
20 where we're going fifty miles to get to the edge of the box is a  
21 much more difficult thing than checking life jackets and  
22 checking registrations and those types of things. I don't know  
23 why it's never been brought to the forefront like what happened  
24 with boating safety and I know Wallop-Breaux is where the  
25 boating safety money came from when it first started and you had  
26 very influential legislators that got involved and saw it as an  
27 important thing and took it.

28  
29 I think that's kind of where the JEA program started. Florida  
30 has been involved back to the 1980s. We've only been receiving  
31 money for about the last ten years. With that money, and this  
32 is just into a little detail, each of the states basically has  
33 to prove what they're doing with the money and what we do in  
34 Florida is we take half of that million, about \$500,000, and we  
35 use it to run our large vessel offshore program, our big fifty-  
36 footer and eighty-five-footer, to get us way offshore, to get  
37 out to a hundred miles or 120 miles or 200 miles.

38  
39 The other half of it, we use to buy new stuff, if we need to  
40 purchase something to go with those boats. All of the salaries  
41 for all of the officers that are working JEA in Florida are paid  
42 by the State of Florida.

43  
44 What's happening with our budgets, as our budgets decrease and  
45 our personnel decrease because of the budget cuts, is eventually  
46 that's going to affect the number of people that can be out  
47 there and doing this type of job.

1 One of the things that we've been very careful to do is not pay  
2 salaries with the JEA. We did that with the sanctuary program  
3 in the Keys and we ended up just having to do away with nine  
4 positions down there because the sanctuary money dried up.

5  
6 With this money, it needs to be long-term and it needs to be  
7 consistent and it needs to be fair. If states have certain  
8 needs, that amount of money should be allocated for that. I  
9 completely agree with what Colonel Mayne said about we don't  
10 want to pigeonhole ourselves into a corner with reporting JEA  
11 hours and JEA activities.

12  
13 When an officer goes out there and checks a boat, he's looking  
14 for everything. That is part of what a law enforcement officer  
15 does and we don't want -- We may have specific goals we're  
16 looking for, but to try to pigeonhole them into certain things  
17 can be very difficult.

18  
19 **MR. GOODRICH:** I'll definitely go along with what both Jeff and  
20 Brett said, where we're at on that. One of the things that  
21 comes to mind when you asked about allocation and how that was  
22 done is that -- I know Tracy went over that, but I would hope  
23 that they would have input, being in charge of the Southeast  
24 Division, about how that allocation could be fairly done. I  
25 didn't hear that, but I would hope that that answers.

26  
27 Then the other thing is that we do use that. It's kind of soft  
28 money, because we haven't been able to count on it. Continually  
29 ours, in Texas, has continually spiraled down, while our  
30 enforcement efforts have gotten greater and we're giving -- As  
31 you'll see in my presentation later, we're giving far more than  
32 what we get paid for and yet, we see that as our effort, because  
33 we believe in what we do and we also want to be good partners in  
34 that operation and we've always proposed to do that.

35  
36 As we all know, the way the economy is right now, I can't say  
37 that's going to continue, because we have to look at that part  
38 of it. I have someone to answer to, as all of you do, I'm sure,  
39 and in my state, they're going to ask me, why are we continuing  
40 to do that when we're not getting funds? We're going to have to  
41 look into that. What I would rather see is if we couldn't look  
42 at a better allocation of funds.

43  
44 **MR. DUNN:** This gets above my pay grade. We do get some input,  
45 more so here in the last year than we ever have. Normally,  
46 Headquarters pretty much gave us the amount that we were going  
47 to distribute and if anybody was unhappy with that, they went to  
48 Headquarters and so we did not get much input.

1  
2 This year, we did a little bit and I'm sure it will change when  
3 we get a new director, as to how we handle all this. Let me say  
4 this though on how the mechanism of the JEA works, because I've  
5 heard we get a lot of extra hours for the money and we always  
6 appreciate when people do more for us than we pay for, but the  
7 reality is that the JEA does allow 50 percent of the funds to go  
8 to direct purchases, which benefits the state. That's part of  
9 the cost of doing business and we say that's fine, because we're  
10 a pain to deal with.

11  
12 The state gets that for equipment and we ask no hours in return  
13 for it. For the hours that we ask, we sit down and go over  
14 budgets with the state and say we want X number, let's say a  
15 hundred hours, of offshore patrol. What will that cost us for a  
16 boat and X number of personnel on it and that's what we'll pay  
17 for.

18  
19 That boat, if it does go offshore, is doing our work, but it's  
20 also doing state work and especially if we have near-shore work  
21 done. Again, it's a benefit to both agencies and we see that,  
22 that the state, while doing our work, is able to do its work and  
23 it's getting funding for it. It's a little bit of a tradeoff on  
24 both sides of it. It's not clearly all in our benefit, but we  
25 do need those patrols, because we don't have -- We have not been  
26 funded for the vessels or the people to do them and so clearly  
27 it is a big help to us.

28  
29 **MAJOR BLANKENSHIP:** We're sitting up here with Tracy and Hal,  
30 but there's only a finite amount of money that is allocated  
31 every year to the JEAs nationwide. They take that finite amount  
32 of money and have to divide it among twenty-six different states  
33 or territories and so our goal as a law enforcement committee is  
34 to increase that amount of money that is there to be divided  
35 among the states.

36  
37 The bigger problem is not the way that the money is allocated,  
38 but it's just that there's not enough money there to be  
39 allocated to the different states to do the things that we are  
40 asked to do or tasked with.

41  
42 I know we have a lot to cover today, but when I first started  
43 with the state, we regulated speckled trout and redbfish. That  
44 was the only thing that had size or bag limits. Now, we have  
45 size and bag limits for just about everything and it's the same  
46 way with the federal programs.

47  
48 We started out with red snapper at ten fish at thirteen inches

1 or whatever it was all those years ago and now we have all these  
2 different programs and these special management zones and closed  
3 areas and talking about catch share programs. As we continue to  
4 increase that, it increases the demands on enforcement to spend  
5 more time out there and to do more enforcement work, but that  
6 universe of money that we have for the JEAs is not -- Like Jeff  
7 said, since 2001 it's been flat.

8  
9 There's been no increase either for inflation or a cost  
10 adjustment and there's definitely been no expansion in those  
11 funds for the increased amount of work product that is expected  
12 not just from the council, but from the public. They expect  
13 quality enforcement and the number of hours to be put in to  
14 enforce the regulations that the council moves forward with.  
15 That's where our biggest goal is as a committee, is to increase  
16 that JEA funding overall.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Before I get to Larry, has there ever been any  
19 discussions or thoughts about an event funding, like this oil  
20 spill or like a hurricane, maybe a special pot of money that  
21 would go into JEA or into enforcement during an event like that?  
22 That's the question I would like to have answered, because I  
23 think we need to think proactive here, because we're going to  
24 have other events, whatever they're going to be.

25  
26 There may be needs for Washington to think about how we fund  
27 events into the future, rather than straining our JEA program we  
28 already have on hand.

29  
30 **MR. SIMPSON:** Could Tracy or Hal give us an idea of the total  
31 nationwide funding set aside for JEA and the relative  
32 background, and you don't have to be precise, by region, what we  
33 receive as compared to others?

34  
35 **MR. ROBBINS:** I want to say it's \$18.1 or \$18.2 million  
36 nationwide. That's among the six divisions. Keep in mind some  
37 divisions only have one state. The Southwest Division has  
38 California.

39  
40 We have eight states and two territories and we allocate  
41 approximately \$6.1 million to those organizations. However,  
42 we're cut this year and yesterday, I was told that we can  
43 anticipate a continuing resolution possibly for an entire year  
44 and also rather than enhancements, that we might be looking at  
45 some cuts and so I don't have any way of forecasting that.

46  
47 **MR. SAPP:** I want to go back to your initial comments that you  
48 made to us and I'm interested in finding out specifically what

1 actions we can take as a council that will help you in your  
2 efforts for funding.

3  
4 You talked specifically about priorities and it might be that  
5 you'll get some input from council members or from staff at some  
6 point down the road. I've got the letter here that I just read  
7 that was sent from the South Atlantic Council to Dr. Lubchenco.  
8 Can you comment? Would a letter like that from our council be  
9 useful or is there anything else specifically that we can do  
10 that we can take action on here today to help you guys out?

11  
12 **MR. ROBBINS:** Just as the council can't lobby, I can't lobby  
13 either.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** I think sending a letter to Lubchenco is  
16 really not lobbying on the council's part. We can send a letter  
17 of support asking for more funding for you guys at that level, I  
18 believe.

19  
20 **MR. ROBBINS:** I would be happy to see some support to Dr.  
21 Lubchenco.

22  
23 **MAJOR NORTON:** This is my last meeting and so I can make this  
24 comment, probably. In order to make this change, I don't know  
25 that Dr. Lubchenco is the right place to go. I think you've got  
26 to get Congress involved. I think you've got to have their  
27 support.

28  
29 I'll go one step further. We're creating all this regulation  
30 based on Magnuson-Stevens and why was there not a component  
31 written into Magnuson-Stevens that said you'll have to pay for  
32 it too? There needed to be something in that legislation,  
33 because to say you're going to create legislation without any  
34 teeth to go with it or, and I'll go the next step, without any  
35 scientific basis, to have the right scientists pulling the right  
36 data and have the appropriate funding levels for those  
37 scientists.

38  
39 It's a two-prong approach that had to have been done and I  
40 haven't seen it anywhere. I haven't seen it on the scientific  
41 side and I haven't seen it on the enforcement side and I think  
42 it's going to take some select members of Congress to get  
43 involved and to really push it.

44  
45 At what point do the councils make a decision that well, yes, we  
46 passed it, but we're hoping that people are going to comply with  
47 it? To base it on this funding level of the \$15 to \$17 million,  
48 that's nothing compared to the amount of regulation that's being



1 passed across the country right now.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** I think the reason you're here is for the  
4 council to hear just that, so we can figure out how.

5

6 **MR. SHEPHERD GRIMES:** I just wanted to point out the  
7 restrictions are really on lobbying Congress. You can write  
8 letters to Lubchenco and within the agency suggesting that  
9 priorities would be whatever you want them to be. It's sending  
10 it to Congress and requesting appropriations that's prohibited.

11

12 **MR. PERRET:** I agree with the comments that were made. I've  
13 said them all during my career. Of course, I had to leave one  
14 state because I must have said too much, but I've testified on  
15 the reauthorization of Magnuson numerous times. I obviously  
16 didn't do a very good job, because I requested additional monies  
17 for various things, enforcement being one.

18

19 This is no different than exactly what takes places in your  
20 state and every Gulf state. We natural resource agencies get  
21 mandates every legislative session that are unfunded mandates  
22 and what do we do? We've got to spread ourselves thinner and  
23 thinner and thinner to do all the stuff.

24

25 An individual or a group that has supported elected officials,  
26 that support what you and I and people in this room are trying  
27 to do, probably have a lot more influence than me or you going  
28 up there and telling them we need more money, but we all need to  
29 work together to do it, but it's the same thing at the state  
30 level. Unfunded mandates come down every session.

31

32 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Anyone else?

33

34 **MS. WILLIAMS:** Corky, in case you haven't heard, our Governor  
35 announced that he was cutting everybody back, all the  
36 departments, by 15 percent.

37

38 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Any other comments? Does everyone understand  
39 JEAs now? Any other questions while these officers are here?  
40 If so, we'll move on. With this, we're going to move into the  
41 State and Federal Reports and, Brett, I think you're up first on  
42 the agenda. Since you're leaving us, you might as well be  
43 first.

44

45 **STATE/FEDERAL REPORTS**

46

**FLORIDA**

47

48 **MAJOR NORTON:** I'm actually not. I'm going to come to the next

1 meeting as well.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Mississippi brought hats. Where you all's  
4 hats? We need hats from every state.

5  
6 **MAJOR NORTON:** I'm going to go through a quick rundown of our  
7 Florida state report and the way we traditionally do this in our  
8 meeting, the way I've done it is not just based on fisheries  
9 stuff, but kind of just a state of the state on what's going on  
10 in Florida.

11  
12 Obviously you heard that we're making some changes at  
13 Headquarters. We've got some new promotions and we've got some  
14 movement. Part of the reason that Rob is taking over is some of  
15 that movement that is occurring. He will be responsible for our  
16 large offshore boat program, coordination with our marine  
17 fisheries section, and then obviously dealing with the councils,  
18 commissions, and the JEA program, which all fit together.

19  
20 Some of the other things that we're working on are boating  
21 accident type stuff, which goes back to my comment about boating  
22 safety money. We actually rolled out a completely electronic  
23 way of tracking boating accidents statewide. All officers will  
24 completely electronically submit those reports.

25  
26 The carrot at the end of the stick for us to get our \$11 million  
27 is that we submit those boating accidents in a timely manner to  
28 Coast Guard Headquarters. Now it will be completely electronic  
29 from the computer in the officer's boat.

30  
31 Cooperative enforcement, I've got a whole document I'm going to  
32 hand out. Joint details for marine fisheries, integration with  
33 uniform patrol, we're doing a -- We've got a pilot program in  
34 Florida. We called it Resource Protection Unit back in the  
35 1990s, back during the net ban, but it's -- I don't remember the  
36 term they call it, Real Folks Real People, but it's basically  
37 officers that put on plain clothes and they go to work in plain  
38 clothes. They may go on the pier one day and go fishing and  
39 they may go pay for a charterboat and go fishing.

40  
41 It's a way to keep the industry and the general public honest in  
42 what they're doing, because it may be an officer standing there  
43 next to you fishing who is watching you catch too many fish or  
44 too small fish.

45  
46 Forensics, we're doing some great stuff with forensics. We've  
47 actually got forensic officers in each one of the regions now  
48 that are actually -- They've got kits and they can identify what

1 type of blood and what type of fish it is and then we've got a  
2 full-blown DNA lab that are taking those fish. We had worked  
3 with some industry people and we decided to do it ourselves  
4 because it actually worked better for us.

5  
6 Another big thing that may be of interest to the council is  
7 internet crimes. Obviously everybody in this world wants to  
8 brag. In the old days, you would put your little picture at the  
9 bait store and now everybody puts it on Facebook.

10  
11 We've got a whole section devoted to looking at the internet and  
12 looking at Facebook and looking at My Space and all the  
13 craziness that's being put on these pages, we could literally  
14 spend our time nonstop making resource cases based on stupid  
15 things people put on the internet.

16  
17 Captive wildlife may not be of interest if you live in  
18 Louisiana, but in Florida, we have a slight problem with large  
19 reptiles and we have a reptile of concern program which we are  
20 rolling out. There's new legislation that went with it and  
21 we're actually regulating how big a snake you can have and  
22 certain types of other creatures you can have in your house.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** All our captive wildlife in Louisiana are on  
25 Bourbon Street.

26  
27 **MAJOR NORTON:** I'm just going through the high points. One of  
28 the things that we've been very much involved in in Florida,  
29 because of the domestic security needs, is we've actually got a  
30 curriculum that is put together and we're teaching nationwide  
31 right now on domestic security and fast speed boarding, stopping  
32 boats in tactical-type situations. We're rolling that out  
33 across the country.

34  
35 Probably the most interesting thing is we were able to bundle  
36 two years worth of JEA money together to take a very, very old  
37 1967 Air Force missile retriever -- We took it to a shipyard in  
38 Fort Lauderdale who builds the \$100 million super yachts,  
39 Director Marine. They were about to layoff shipyard workers  
40 because the economy was crashing.

41  
42 We basically went to them and said we need to rebuild this boat.  
43 When the boat pulled into Fort Lauderdale, one of the crew  
44 members pulled his Leatherman out of his gun belt and touched it  
45 to the side of the hull and it went right through the side of  
46 the hull. That's how rusted out this hull was.

47  
48 For \$1.3 million, we have a looks brand new eighty-five-footer

1 that is probably the most capable ship, me being a Navy guy,  
2 that I've ever been aboard. It's got every electronic you could  
3 possibly think of.

4  
5 It's got a v-notch in the back to recover and launch the rigid  
6 hull inflatable. It's got green engines. They came back and  
7 they were taking -- They estimated fifteen-foot seas, but I know  
8 they were a lot bigger than that. We've got video of waves  
9 hitting the bridges thirty or thirty-five feet above the water  
10 and the waves were hitting the bridge.

11  
12 There were some monster seas. We're going to do a christening  
13 on it on December 12 in Carrabelle, anybody who might be  
14 interested to attend that. We're going to send out invitations.

15  
16 We'll talk about computers for a minute. We did roll out  
17 computers for all of our officers. We've actually worked with a  
18 vendor out of Canada to build the world's first computer mount,  
19 saltwater capable computer mount, for all of our patrol boats  
20 and we're rolling those out.

21  
22 We're also doing a lot of surveillance cameras. One of the  
23 things we learned from the whole Deepwater Horizon thing was you  
24 need to have cameras to show that is really going on and these  
25 are IP-based computer transmitted video images, where we can  
26 actually have a camera on the boat and show what you're seeing,  
27 the oil in the water and those kinds of things, back to our  
28 operations center.

29  
30 We'll talk about some cases real quick and these are just an  
31 example of some of the cases we do. A thirty-foot center  
32 console boat located five one-gallon bags full of filets. The  
33 filets were identified as black sea bass, grouper, and red  
34 snapper. That was a South Atlantic case.

35  
36 An injured dolphin was sighted near Naples Pier several weeks  
37 ago. It had a large amount of monofilament line wrapped around  
38 its right front flipper and it had become embedded in the  
39 tissue. Officers pulled the dolphin in and were able to save  
40 it.

41  
42 Fifty-three vermilion snapper and two red snapper were seized on  
43 a boarding, 710 lobster tails, 117 containers of oysters,  
44 sawfish. This was one of the internet ones. There was an ad  
45 online of somebody selling a smalltooth sawfish and we basically  
46 went to purchase it and then arrested the guy.

47  
48 Lots of undersized and over the limit black sea bass. Another

1 JEA red snapper, sea turtles during the cold snap. There were  
2 lots of sea turtle rescues. 310 lobster tails, six stone crab  
3 claws, more red snapper, ninety-one fish filets down in the  
4 Keys.

5  
6 That was just a snippet. We just take out some and throw them  
7 in the report. Like I said, the reports are available to  
8 anybody that's interested.

9  
10 The last thing on fleet management, one of the things that we  
11 were able to do and, once again, it's part of the economy,  
12 keeping people working, we're working with Boston Whaler Factory  
13 down in Edgewater, Florida. They just signed a contract with  
14 the Navy to build all their new rigid hull inflatables for the  
15 Navy.

16  
17 We made a commitment to them and have started buying a bunch of  
18 their boats as well and it's been very beneficial for us to be  
19 able to spend a little bit of the state's money to get us some  
20 new equipment and have that money go back to the people who work  
21 in Florida. Thank you.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thanks for the report. Any comments or  
24 questions for the great state of Florida?

25  
26 **MR. TEEHAN:** I do have to agree with Brett. My wife makes a  
27 habit of going through Facebook and the internet and the City of  
28 Tallahassee bulletin board. It is amazing how many yahoos out  
29 there are trying to sell illegal fish on the internet.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Any other comments? If not, Chris, you're up.

32  
33 **ALABAMA**

34  
35 **MAJOR BLANKENSHIP:** I do want to tell you that I appreciate the  
36 opportunity for us to all be here today to meet with the full  
37 council. I think it's good for us to meet with you all and I  
38 think it's good for you all to hear our concerns and I think  
39 it's moving us in the positive direction.

40  
41 I'll try and keep our Alabama report fairly brief, mostly to  
42 discuss the things that have federal fisheries issues, but back  
43 to the JEA, one thing I will say while we're here, to pat our  
44 state on the back a little bit, is they do give out -- We have a  
45 cooperative enforcement program meeting every couple of years,  
46 where all the states get together, and NMFS gives an award to a  
47 state which is that they call the Excellence of Quality Program.

1 For this past meeting in May, Alabama received that award for  
2 this two-year period and so we're very proud of the program that  
3 we have under the JEA in Alabama.

4  
5 The JEAs, we've purchased several vessels and just some more  
6 recent examples of how the JEAs work, we had a complaint about  
7 some vessels that were fishing in the closed area last week, at  
8 the Patronus Rig doing some tuna fishing, and we had a patrol  
9 that was leaving that morning to go out and to work something  
10 else particularly when we got the complaint.

11  
12 We sent them and they went out and ended up not making a case at  
13 the Patronus Rig, but ended up with another commercial vessel at  
14 a different spot fishing in the area that was closed because of  
15 the oil spill.

16  
17 That's how those agreements really work. The complaint came  
18 from National Marine Fisheries Service and so it's a good  
19 example of how our programs work and how well we work together  
20 as states with the federal folks.

21  
22 We passed some legislation last year, an oyster management bill,  
23 where we revamped the way that we manage oysters in Alabama.  
24 We're setting up check stations and we have much more control  
25 over the oysters that come off of our reefs. We're doing a lot  
26 of things different the way that we cultivate the reefs. We're  
27 going to allow a certain amount of dredging, the way that the  
28 oysters are tagged, set us a shell feed to help us with our  
29 oyster management, and to provide resources for more planning.  
30 That was a big change for us in Alabama this year on a state  
31 level.

32  
33 We amended our saltwater fish creel bag and possession limit  
34 regulation to be in line with the federal prohibited sharks and  
35 prohibited species and another thing we did in that regulation  
36 was make it illegal for vessels that we have jurisdiction over  
37 in Alabama -- We made it illegal for them to possess red drum in  
38 federal waters, so that we could prosecute those vessels. If we  
39 caught them in federal waters with red drum, we could prosecute  
40 those in state court, which is a big help as a deterrent to  
41 those boats leaving from Alabama.

42  
43 We have jurisdiction over vessels leaving from Alabama, coming  
44 back to Alabama, license, if they have any kind of Alabama or  
45 they're registered in Alabama, among other things. That was a  
46 big step that we took to be able to do that.

47  
48 We also passed a regulation for the commercial and for the

1 recreational fisheries that any time any Gulf reef fish species  
2 is closed in federal waters adjacent to Alabama that that  
3 species is also closed for harvest in Alabama waters, to cut out  
4 some of the loopholes that were in place. To keep it short,  
5 I'll finish up the Alabama report and I'll be happy to answer  
6 any questions anybody has about the things we're doing in  
7 Alabama.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Chris. Any questions for the  
10 Alabama delegation? Johnny? I know one thing you want is for  
11 them to use your boat for charters with the undercover guys,  
12 right? All right. That would be good. Thank you very much,  
13 Chris. Corky, are you going to do Mississippi? Corky is gone.  
14 Mississippi is not in the room? Next is Louisiana.

15  
16 **LOUISIANA**

17  
18 **LT COL MAYNE:** I'll keep it brief also. A lot of our time in  
19 the past several months has been dedicated towards BP and  
20 dealing with the oil spill and recovery issues associated with  
21 that.

22  
23 Some of the things that happened because of the oil spill is  
24 because we had to move some of our JEA hours into some of what  
25 Tracy was referring to, is those direct equipment purchases. We  
26 were able to enhance some of our equipment.

27  
28 Part of our JEA program is, because from an administrative  
29 perspective we can't rely on it every year, we use all our hours  
30 and overtime hours. If it goes away, those extra FTEs that we  
31 were able to generate with that funding would go away.

32  
33 Right now, we're working on our budget for next year. We're  
34 anticipating a several million dollar shortfall and so we're  
35 doing different things to help overcome with those issues. We  
36 have, fortunately, before the budget crisis really came down, we  
37 have a fifteen cadet academy class in our academy right now,  
38 which brings us to a full TO. They'll be graduating in March  
39 and most of them will be on our statewide strike force and it  
40 will be a mobile enforcement team that we'll use in problem  
41 areas when different issues arise.

42  
43 Another important thing we're working on right now, and we were  
44 prior to the oil spill, is our seafood certification program and  
45 traceability program. I guess the oil spill has even brought  
46 that to a more important level than previously: just wanting to  
47 enhance prices for our fishermen and wanting to benefit the  
48 state's economy. It's now about having that fishery and the

1 commercial fishery survive and get our commercial fisheries back  
2 up.

3  
4 Like Brett, we took you lead, realizing that we were having some  
5 problems with some reptiles and snakes, and we passed a bill  
6 that would allow people, if they possess an illegal wildlife --  
7 There's kind of an amnesty program. If they come and turn it in  
8 and contact us before we go catch them, then we'll take care of  
9 it and give them a walk, to try to prevent some of these snakes  
10 and reptiles from being released out into the wild and  
11 preventing problems on into the future.

12  
13 Just talking about BP again, we worked about 86,000 hours to  
14 date dealing with BP. We made 601 total citations dealing with  
15 the closed area, not counting the warnings.

16  
17 How we handled it, and we coordinated with the other states and  
18 federal agencies, is because these openings and closures were  
19 happening so fast, for a twenty-four-hour period we warned  
20 fishermen that we found in that area and after that twenty-four-  
21 hour period, we would issue citations.

22  
23 Even after the closure was issued, we ensured that none of the  
24 product that was harvested from a closed area ever entered into  
25 the market. 359 of those commercial citations were in state  
26 waters and ninety-five were in federal waters. There were 120  
27 recreational in state waters and twenty-nine recreational in  
28 federal waters.

29  
30 About 49,000 pounds of shrimp were seized, 812 trout, 1,200  
31 pounds of crabs, twenty-six red drum, and 115 sacks of oysters  
32 and various other species.

33  
34 Because of the BP oil spill, another thing that is kind of  
35 brought to light is we actually showed the world what the impact  
36 of one rig could do in the Gulf of Mexico and it's raised the  
37 threat level significantly and so maritime security has kind of  
38 been put on the forefront and we're also charged with maritime  
39 security in Louisiana and so we're undergoing some cooperative  
40 training with our state police, to where we're doing some  
41 maritime security operations with our swat activity on the water  
42 with our swat teams that are our own and state police.

43  
44 Those issues are another enhancement that we'll be looking into  
45 the future for preventing potential terrorist threats that may  
46 happen in the Gulf. With that, if anybody has any questions, I  
47 would be happy to answer them.



1 **MR. FISCHER:** Jeff, you left out a very successful satellite  
2 office in Grand Isle.

3

4 **LT COL MAYNE:** I figured you had already talked about that,  
5 Myron.

6

7 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** We have an excellent facility that Myron  
8 helped put together down in Grand Isle. If you haven't been  
9 there, it's a great facility, a really good facility, and,  
10 Myron, I don't think any storm is going to get rid of that one.  
11 It's pretty solid.

12

13 **MR. FISCHER:** It is and many council people here have come to  
14 the lab and it's out of the way, but we would welcome any  
15 visitors, anyone to come on by. I know this isn't the subject  
16 at hand, but thank you, Harlon. It is theoretically built to  
17 hurricane standards. We'll see what that is down the road as it  
18 unfolds.

19

20 We've always supplied enforcement with facilities, but with the  
21 BP episode, we just opened the doors and enforcement now has an  
22 office at our site and they have a presence on the island.  
23 Grand Isle is one of the center hubs of both the recreational  
24 and commercial fishery and so it just works in hand for having  
25 an enforcement presence right at the site.

26

27 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** One of the other things that Myron and  
28 enforcement has done is they were not our tour guides, but at  
29 least our buses on the water. Every time I would call Myron  
30 with twenty chefs or the Prince of Monaco or whoever came down,  
31 he would assist us in showing us where the oil was or wasn't and  
32 take them all around the marshes below Grand Isle or above Grand  
33 Isle, excuse me. They did a great job with that, as they always  
34 have. Any other questions?

35

36 **MR. GREENE:** I would like to ask Jeff a question there. Just as  
37 a fisherman, from a standpoint of -- I know some of the guys in  
38 the audience and myself have always kind of wondered about the  
39 fishing boats fishing around the rigs and stuff. Will there be  
40 any implications from that? You talk about the terrorists and  
41 ramifications of that and how is that going to transpire into  
42 the for-hire industry?

43

44 **LT COL MAYNE:** I know those are issues that will be coming up as  
45 different companies address those protocols that they have on  
46 their own. I know there's been suspension of fishing from the  
47 rigs with a lot of companies, just because of problems they've  
48 had in the past.

1  
2 To this point, I don't know of any company that has wanted to do  
3 any prohibitions around the rigs, but I suspect that those  
4 terror assessments are going to be done and we may see some  
5 impacts.  
6

7 One of the things that Louisiana is doing and the other Gulf  
8 states is it shows the importance of the artificial rig program  
9 and having those programs in other places and opportunities for  
10 people to fish. Eventually, I think you will see further  
11 restrictions around some of the more production rigs.  
12

13 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Any other questions for Louisiana? Next up is  
14 Robert and Texas.  
15

#### 16 **TEXAS**

17  
18 **MR. GOODRICH:** I'm trying to give you a little visual here and I  
19 don't know how that's going to work, but my presentation is  
20 going to be up there on a PowerPoint. I'm not going to be as  
21 brief and I'm going to tell you that right up front, but we'll  
22 go down through this.  
23

24 This kind of goes over our JEA report that we do annually and so  
25 we're giving a little background here about that and I know  
26 everyone here understands that, that the reason we have that is  
27 to facilitate the operations, administration, and funding to  
28 enforce the federal regulations.  
29

30 Again, all those acts underneath there are things we look at  
31 when we're out there and as Jeff said before, we look at  
32 everything and so we're doing all that. Our plan, of course,  
33 our operations plan for the state, is a framework and again, we  
34 enforce the federal and state fisheries regulations in the  
35 coastal waters.  
36

37 We're working jointly with NOAA and National Marine Fisheries to  
38 do that. Again, it's a jointly administered plan and it  
39 increases the presence of all of us out there and so we're  
40 looking at all the regulations that are passed here and  
41 everything through the federal and state as we're out there.  
42

43 This is just an overview and a little scope of the financial  
44 demographics of our JEA plan for this past year and what we did  
45 with some of the direct purchase monies and how those are broken  
46 down into the hours that we're expected to do by dockside  
47 inspections, how many outreach hours. This is how it's broken  
48 down: administrative, clerical, the at-sea hours, and then,

1 again, the cost of those. That's just broken out into hours and  
2 I'll show you later how that breaks out by different vessels.

3  
4 It's a total of our direct operations and our direct purchases  
5 and that particular one, we purchased a twenty-nine-foot SAFE  
6 boat out of that funding, which by the way, you'll see some of  
7 those pictures of the SAFE boat. Those have really increased  
8 our ability to get out there in that middle water and a little  
9 bit further out. We anticipate it's going to get even better.

10

11 That's the vessel we purchased right there. It's the Patrol  
12 Vessel Ty Patterson. We had it commissioned in June. It's down  
13 in Galveston. We made a few modifications to the SAFE boat  
14 design for us, but I've been in that vessel and some of the  
15 others that are center console that we've gotten from different  
16 grants, but those are great vessels and, again, we're using them  
17 inshore and offshore. They're a great patrol asset out there.

18

19 The JEA, I know no one has talked a little bit about amendments,  
20 but as we go through a JEA process, oftentimes there are things  
21 that come up that require an amendment and we work very closely  
22 with Tracy and Hal and their staff and they work great with us  
23 on when there's an amendment that needs to be done.

24

25 I just wanted to show you a little bit here about how that  
26 works. We reconciled our dockside hours, because we weren't  
27 going to make those dockside hours because we turned our  
28 enforcement efforts out in the water, because of Deepwater  
29 Horizon.

30

31 What Deepwater Horizon did to us in Texas was we experienced a  
32 huge increase in the fishery activity, because they couldn't  
33 fish over there and so they came over here to fish. It's that  
34 kind of a way.

35

36 In order to address that, National Marine Fisheries got with us  
37 and said we need to increase enforcement into TEDs and BRDs and  
38 that's what we're going to do and we made an amendment and we  
39 actually got -- You talked about money that could be allocated  
40 and towards the end of our program, there in August, we actually  
41 got that \$86,157 added to us for those midrange vessel hours,  
42 the offshore long-range hours, and then some aircraft hours.

43

44 By the way, we've got a new aircraft onboard and now we have  
45 three and that is the real way to really get out there and look  
46 at your enforcement effort. That's the thing that we need more  
47 of, is to be able to eyes on, so that we aren't just cruising  
48 around out there looking for a violation.

1  
2 We put them up in the air and we see what's going on out there  
3 and we can direct enforcement effort and so we're working to try  
4 to get more of those hours, but unfortunately, like everyone  
5 else, it's a budget item and planes are real expensive to run.  
6  
7 Again, this is kind of our priorities and this is the way it  
8 falls for us in the JEA. We have turtle excluder devices and  
9 the bycatch reduction devices as one of our top priorities. We  
10 patrol inside and outside waters for that in the enforcement  
11 effort and so when we're boarding a shrimp boat, we're looking  
12 at not only the catch and everything else, but all their gear  
13 and equipment. I know you all know that's an extensive effort  
14 there.  
15  
16 We feel like we've increased compliance and I'll talk a little  
17 bit more here in a minute about education. That's really  
18 increased our compliance level as well.  
19  
20 Reef fish, again, we've confirmed our personnel in the reef fish  
21 enforcement. The things that are coming in on the IFQ, we have  
22 a large IFQ landing in the Galveston area and some in the  
23 Brownsville, but we see an increased effort there that's coming  
24 in and landing in our area and that takes many hours.  
25  
26 When you get an IFQ call, so you will know how that comes and an  
27 officer responds, that can be three or four hours of  
28 investigation when that vessel lands and so you're committing a  
29 lot of time to that IFQ enforcement.  
30  
31 Again, dealers, we did something a little different this year.  
32 We went in with dealers. We found that a lot of the product  
33 wasn't getting seen at the landing level and so we went inside,  
34 to the San Antonio and the Dallas areas, and we started doing  
35 inside dealer checks, looking at harvested items coming from our  
36 coastline and other states.  
37  
38 We found a lot of violations and we did a lot of education in  
39 there and what we're finding is that's an extended effort we  
40 intend to continue, is to go inland as well and track the  
41 product from the sea all the way to the plate. That's pretty  
42 much what we're trying to do and that, again, is a part of the  
43 enforcement effort, to make sure that people are doing it  
44 legally.  
45  
46 It gets into the health part too, because we also, in our  
47 efforts, we are looking at landings, not only our landings, but  
48 we're looking at what comes in in the airports from foreign

1 sales and also landings, vessel landings, through ports. Right  
2 now, we've got one of our undercover groups that is really  
3 looking hard in the Houston ship port. There's some landings,  
4 extreme large landings, coming in there from foreign countries.

5  
6 They're illegal in our laws, because they aren't documented and  
7 they aren't licensed, but they're coming in here and we're  
8 including other agencies. NOAA is working with us, as well as  
9 U.S. Fish and Wildlife, on that case, but we're trying to look  
10 at the whole big picture of the fisheries industry.

11  
12 This is a little bit about our hours of distribution and our  
13 final deal here, our dockside hours. As you can see, our  
14 obligation was there on the first column and then what we  
15 completed and as you can see, the percentages of the difference  
16 is all mostly in the plus column, except for that one amended  
17 area there at the top, on dockside, where we amended it to  
18 reflect our increased effort at sea.

19  
20 We talked about how much we're giving into it and let me clarify  
21 that, too. It's not that we're against giving into it, because  
22 we believe that it's a resource for all of us and we believe  
23 that it's a Texas resource as well. It's just that we want the  
24 clear picture of how many hours are involved and the effort  
25 that's involved in it and we're bobbing along on lots of cases  
26 and giving twice as much as we're asked to, but we respond and  
27 that's what we hope to continue to be able to do.

28  
29 Hours of distribution, again, it kind of goes back over where we  
30 were and if you'll look, there's kind of a dollar amount of the  
31 overage. If we had been paid kind of for what we were doing, we  
32 would have hopefully gotten another \$250,000 in our JEA last  
33 year. That's what we did over and above what we were paid for.

34  
35 Again, pie charts and maybe not everybody is into those, but  
36 this is just our contacts, how much we went up. You can see a  
37 lot of our contacts are in the TED and BRD. We're out there  
38 working the commercial fishing industry and the shrimp industry.

39  
40 A lot of those are coming in there and the reef fish is another  
41 big one and so you can see how our enforcement effort is going  
42 in our JEA right there. It's pretty much driven by the  
43 activity, but, again, we're responding to what we can.

44  
45 There's our citation distribution, if you can see it there.  
46 We're way up in our increased enforcement citations. We average  
47 about sixteen JEA citations a month and that's way up from last  
48 year and so we've increased our percentage of effort and a lot

1 of that, I have to go along with Brett there, is it's about  
2 reporting. We've gotten a lot better at reporting our efforts  
3 and recording what the officers are doing, but we're really  
4 beginning to show that we're reaching a lot more effort and  
5 doing a whole lot more with the people we have, but, again,  
6 we're hoping to be able to continue that.

7  
8 Outreach, we talked about that. We made that a priority. We  
9 work with NOAA and National Marine Fisheries and their gear  
10 specialists and we conducted five outreach events up and down  
11 the coast in the different cities, as you'll see there.

12  
13 Those were TED classes and BRD classes and basically, what we  
14 did was offer a class and bring in the game wardens and the guys  
15 that check it every day, along with the gear specialists, and  
16 show the commercial fishermen what they should be having in  
17 their gear and how it should be and what's legal. That was very  
18 beneficial.

19  
20 We felt like there should have been more participation. We had  
21 about 225 commercial fishermen that attended these events, but  
22 what happened out of that was a whole lot of outreach when they  
23 went back out in their communities and explained things.

24  
25 Some of the people that attended it were net makers and those  
26 were critical people, because they came and they're the ones  
27 that put the TEDs in and they put the BRD. They build it all.  
28 They build the net and those were critical people and we got  
29 several of those onboard and I attended a couple of those myself  
30 and it was very beneficial to everybody that went to it.

31  
32 Another thing that we do is we train our wardens the same way.  
33 We'll bring in the net specialists and the wardens will go  
34 through before a season and they'll go back over gear, so we  
35 know that we're looking for the right thing.

36  
37 Another important point here is that we included this outreach  
38 training for commercial fishermen as part of the department-wide  
39 operational land and water plan. When we report to the  
40 legislature, we report that we're doing this. We made it a  
41 requirement that we're going to have to do that and so that  
42 outreach is incorporated into our overall plan.

43  
44 Again, some highlighted cases, and this is available to you all.  
45 I know the print is kind of small there. I took the vessels  
46 out, because I knew that we would be here in the public.  
47 Sometimes we leave the names in there, but I took those out.

1 We had some there that -- This particular first one was a vessel  
2 that we've been watching and I think NOAA had been watching as  
3 well. They were harvesting without a permit and came in with  
4 \$12,000 worth of reef fish and we caught them in the ship  
5 channel and they ended up with quite an expensive NOVA, \$20,000,  
6 and then they lost their \$12,000 worth of product. That was a  
7 real good IFQ enforcement effort right there.

8  
9 The second one was another commercially-permitted reef fish  
10 vessel that was found by the wardens to be in possession of  
11 8,000 pounds of amberjack and amberjack season was closed. I  
12 happened to be out working oyster boats when that one came in  
13 and I remember that we went over there and contacted and the  
14 National Marine Fisheries agents showed up too and that was a  
15 really good case.

16  
17 We were in the middle of oyster season and yet, they turned and  
18 looked straight into this vessel coming in and checked it and  
19 sure enough, it was an IFQ landing and they came in with a  
20 totally illegal load of 8,000 pounds of amberjack.

21  
22 Another one was several shrimp cases that we made. This was  
23 just one of them that was made with 1,600 pounds of shrimp.  
24 Again, another turtle excluder device regulation violation. We  
25 run across a lot of those and I'm not going to list all of them.

26  
27 In the cases when those happen and they're engaged in shrimping  
28 in Texas, we seize it. We seize the product they have and so  
29 they also pay civil restitution for the amount of product that  
30 they have and so they lose it. It's sold to the highest of  
31 three bidders. Those funds are put into the state funds and  
32 then they also have to pay civil restitution, which is put back  
33 into the fisheries. It's a pretty healthy thing. It might just  
34 look like they lost 1,600 pounds of shrimp, but it's a little  
35 more involved than that.

36  
37 We're hoping that with increased enforcement and these  
38 compliance efforts that we're going to continue to get better  
39 compliance in that area.

40  
41 This is kind of some things just so you all will know and I'm  
42 sure you're all aware of it. It's about overhead and, again,  
43 this presentation, you have it downloaded over here and you're  
44 more than welcome to have it, but our overhead is going to  
45 increase and I'm sure everyone's has, but if you look at where  
46 we're headed here, we get -- These boats that we really need to  
47 get out there to do the enforcement aren't cheap and at the same  
48 time, they're not cheap to run either.

1  
2 Then the price of fuel and everything else is going up and our  
3 enforcement costs are going up and what that really means is  
4 when you apply that to the JEA, you're going to end up with less  
5 hours to patrol under a JEA.

6  
7 Again, this just the dynamic or the demographics of our  
8 enforcement effort and that one was for the special one that we  
9 did for the amendment and, again, it was just a matter of cost  
10 and I think I discussed that one already.

11  
12 This is just a comparison between where we are. We're in  
13 another JEA now that it's \$654,000. We have been given an  
14 amendment on that one to bring some more money in to purchase  
15 that thirty-eight-foot Defender SAFE boat. That's going to give  
16 us better range in our middle coast area, where we don't have a  
17 vessel in there, but they've worked with us on amending that so  
18 we can make a direct purchase that's really more than 50 percent  
19 of it. They worked pretty well with us doing that.

20  
21 That's the amendment. That boat is going to end up costing us  
22 \$440,000 and that's our bid on it right there and so you can see  
23 the equipment isn't cheap and we're getting as competitive a bid  
24 as we can from SAFE boat.

25  
26 There's some of our vessels. This is kind of a breakdown of  
27 what it costs to run them and what it's going to cost us next  
28 year to run that same vessel. That bottom vessel is one of our  
29 two sixty-five-foot offshore and then we have several of the  
30 midrange vessels and then, of course, our near-shore vessels.

31  
32 Again, our distribution comparison. As you can see, what we  
33 proposed in FY2011 is we're going to spend most of our time at  
34 sea as we can. That's going to decrease some other areas of  
35 enforcement, but we're going to try to keep our at-sea hours at  
36 peak or better, because we realize that that's where we're going  
37 to make the most difference out there.

38  
39 Just so you'll know, there's a contact report that we kind of  
40 redid and we've put it up for our people and this is just a  
41 contact report that we've kind of reworked a little bit and it's  
42 helped us capture the hours and bring our reporting efforts  
43 better in on violations.

44  
45 Just some statewide updates. Again, that's the total number of  
46 citations and warnings we issued statewide and the total vehicle  
47 miles we patrolled, 11.9 million. Boat hours were 159,000. Our  
48 total field contacts were two-million, six-hundred-and-forty-two



1 -- Believe me, that includes hunting as well.  
2  
3 We've got forty new game wardens that graduated back in July  
4 from the 55<sup>th</sup> training academy. Right now, we have twenty that  
5 are coming into this next academy in January and unless the  
6 budget changes, that may be the twenty that lasts for a couple  
7 of years.  
8  
9 We did have an Aquapalooza two-day event on a major lake. If  
10 you don't know what Aquapalooza is, you're lucky. That's a two-  
11 day event on the water, where they bring out a stage and you  
12 have a performer out there and people get to go free, if they've  
13 got a boat, and attend a concert on the water.  
14  
15 We had 50,000 people and 30,000 boats on the lake, if you can  
16 imagine that. This is the bright side of it. As many accidents  
17 and injuries as we had, we had no deaths during that event and  
18 we count that as a huge success. I know Alabama has had that  
19 and it's quite an event if it comes to your area. Check with us  
20 and we can help you with that, because we learned a whole lot of  
21 things.  
22  
23 Realignment of our region personnel, one thing we did to get a  
24 better supervisor/employee ratio, we realigned our regions and  
25 got more uniformity in there and it's going to prove a better  
26 enforcement effort for us.  
27  
28 What that means is districts changes and the regional lines  
29 changed and that's quite an event when you do that, but what it  
30 is going to help us do is have a better enforcement effort and  
31 better supervision out there.  
32  
33 We responded to the Deepwater Horizon spill issues. Our issues  
34 were more of getting the baseline and helping the coastal  
35 fisheries biologists get the baseline of species, in  
36 anticipation that that thing was going to come around the corner  
37 at Sabine and we were going to have the same problem. Luckily,  
38 that didn't happen and we didn't really get that.  
39  
40 We are still going into some areas that are -- It's an ongoing  
41 thing. What this has triggered now is our General Land Office  
42 has put a wellhead inspection effort out there and guess who is  
43 taking them to the wellheads? It's us. We've actually been  
44 working with the General Land Office and we're doing more of  
45 that this week.  
46  
47 They're going to inspect every wellhead in Texas Gulf waters  
48 over a period of time, to be sure that those wellheads are in

1 compliance, after what happened in Deepwater.  
2  
3 We did have a hurricane Hermione and I'll you that that thing  
4 just produced some record rains over us. We dropped over  
5 fifteen inches inland, in some inland counties. It resulted in  
6 some severe damage and not a lot of loss of life. We had a few,  
7 but mostly it was damage.  
8  
9 Then, finally, I'll talk a little bit about budget. Our  
10 department, right now we've got a plan for a 5 percent reduction  
11 and a plan for a 10 percent reduction in our overall budget and  
12 we're hoping it stays at the 5, but that depends on where our  
13 legislature goes and our legislature goes into session in  
14 January. We've got an \$18 to \$20 billion deficit in the state  
15 right now and so we know that we're going to get hit with that  
16 and I'll be glad to answer any questions you may have.  
17  
18 **MR. TEEHAN:** That was a very good presentation. Who was the  
19 star attraction at Aquapalooza?  
20  
21 **MR. GOODRICH:** You know I'm not a real great country and western  
22 guy, but Brad Somebody.  
23  
24 **MR. TEEHAN:** I just wanted to let you know if that occurs again  
25 that Dr. Crabtree does have a band and they do gigs.  
26  
27 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** And I know his favorite song.  
28  
29 **MR. PERRET:** But they may have a drowning then, Teehan, if --  
30  
31 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you for your report, Robert. That was  
32 very, very detailed and excellent. Any other questions of  
33 Robert before I move on?  
34  
35 **MR. DUNN:** I just wanted to point out one thing that Robert  
36 mentioned which I didn't include in the benefit to the state,  
37 which is while we're paying for those patrols, whether they go  
38 over them or not, and we don't ask them to go over what we pay  
39 for, by the way, but the state receives all the fines and  
40 forfeitures from that.  
41  
42 You had an excellent case that the state got all that money and  
43 so that's a real benefit to the state to enter into the JEA  
44 program.  
45  
46 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Tracy. Mr. Gale isn't here, I  
47 don't think, and so Karen Raine is up next.  
48

NOAA GENERAL COUNSEL

1  
2  
3 **MS. RAINE:** Thank you. Just a few things to report. As far as  
4 the oil spill cases that have come through our office, we've  
5 issued NOVAs, Notices of Violation and Assessment, in seven  
6 cases. The penalties for being in a closed area have ranged  
7 from \$15,000 to \$30,000. One case has settled already. The  
8 total amount charged was \$18,000, \$15,000 for the closed area  
9 violation and the \$3,000 for the TED violation and that was paid  
10 in full.

11  
12 Just a note about some other specific types of cases, there's a  
13 growing concern about violations involving sea turtle mitigation  
14 gear and there have been a number of violations in the Gulf reef  
15 fish fishery and the highly migratory species fisheries.

16  
17 Penalties have in the past been assessed from \$1,500 to \$5,000,  
18 depending on the circumstances and the gear that wasn't in  
19 compliance and I've been just asked to point out that penalties  
20 may increase if the non-compliance continues in that area.

21  
22 I don't have a printout of our cases. I know I've done that in  
23 the past, but as part of the responses to the Inspector General  
24 Reports and that type of thing, all of our cases nationwide are  
25 now being publicized online and I'm going to give you the  
26 website address so that you can see not just the Southeast  
27 cases, but cases from other parts of the country.

28  
29 That can be found at [www.gc.noaa.gov/enforce-office.html](http://www.gc.noaa.gov/enforce-office.html). There  
30 will be the charging information for the NOVAs and the Notice of  
31 Permit Sanctions that are issued as well as settlement agreement  
32 information.

33  
34 Also, I would imagine most of you know this, but if you don't,  
35 also out on October 21<sup>st</sup>, a Notice of Availability was published  
36 for the Draft Policy for the Assessment of Civil Administrative  
37 Penalties and Permit Sanctions for public review and comment and  
38 the comment period ends on December 20<sup>th</sup>. It's the policy on  
39 penalties and permit sanctions.

40  
41 The other thing is this year there have been I guess four  
42 decisions by administrative law judges in cases that have  
43 actually gone to hearing, for the Southeast Region anyway, and I  
44 thought I would briefly mention those.

45  
46 One involved a South Atlantic permit case. It was a headboat  
47 that didn't have all the various headboat permits that it needed  
48 and the administrative law judge imposed a penalty of \$1,500.

1 That case is currently under appeal before the administrator.

2  
3 There was a case from the Gulf in which undersized red grouper  
4 was possessed. There were four charges, one for possessing  
5 undersized red grouper, one for failing to maintain the red  
6 grouper intact until offloaded onshore, a charge for failing to  
7 comply with provisions related to the Gulf red snapper IFQ  
8 program, and a failure to maintain vessel monitoring system  
9 transmissions.

10  
11 The administrative law judge found that the agency had proved  
12 three of the charges. The charge that he found that the agency  
13 didn't prove involved the red snapper IFQ program charge and a  
14 penalty of \$21,500 was assessed, along with a seventy-day permit  
15 sanction.

16  
17 Another case out of the Gulf was exceeding the bag limit or  
18 possession limit for red snapper and the administrative law  
19 judge found that the allegations were not proved and then the  
20 last one was a Magnuson Lacey Act case out of the Gulf, where  
21 the NOVA charged that there was federal fishing for shrimp  
22 without a moratorium permit and/or a Lacey Act violation for  
23 possessing fish taken or possessed in violation of Louisiana  
24 law, where it was closed. The administrative law judge imposed  
25 a \$15,000 penalty. He found that both charges were proved, but  
26 that was just recently issued and so there's still time for that  
27 to be appealed. I think that's it, unless there are any  
28 questions.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Karen. Any questions for Karen?

31  
32 **MR. ANSON:** Do you have any details on that case for the red  
33 snapper, where it wasn't proven?

34  
35 **MS. RAINE:** I think the issue there was basically an officer  
36 didn't actually see the red snapper being offloaded and I think  
37 that was sort of the issue.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none,  
40 Tracy, you're up.

41  
42 **NOAA OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT**

43  
44 **MR. DUNN:** Of course, we have a lot fewer people with which to  
45 direct and we had a lot of cases that we were dealing with  
46 coming from the other agencies. We worked well with the Coast  
47 Guard and Louisiana in developing a lot of their cases.

1 Once a case is made -- Now, the Coast Guard handled a lot of  
2 their own. They were out there and they did the seizure and  
3 they didn't call us or we just would go ahead and handle it.  
4 They went through their system, but every other case, one of our  
5 agents has to pick up, review, add to it, and then send it in  
6 for our staff to additional information and so we spend a lot of  
7 time dealing with that.

8  
9 My agents also were on the water and we have a few boats we were  
10 able to put back into service with gray tape and we were out  
11 there along with everybody else, trying to do the best we could  
12 to keep that closed area intact.

13  
14 Karen talked about a lot of the cases we did that turned into  
15 NOVAs, or at least mentioned them. That was a lot of work on  
16 our part. One of the unsung heroes in all this, and it's not  
17 coming up a lot, was our vessel monitoring system staff.

18  
19 They provided a great deal of information to all agencies about  
20 what they were able to see and when it came to the reef fish and  
21 those fisheries where we do monitor it, that worked out very  
22 well.

23  
24 Of course, the shrimp fishery does not fall underneath that and  
25 so that's a whole different issue, but where we had those on the  
26 boats, not only did they help us see any boat going into the  
27 area, but they also protected the fishery, in that we could tell  
28 when a boat was in there or not in there and we could report  
29 that the vast majority of those fishermen stayed well away from  
30 the area, which helped them in their cause as well.

31  
32 We had one significant case and we still did do some other  
33 investigations. We have a criminal indictment where a fisherman  
34 was boarded by the FWC and sent in for further investigation and  
35 in the process decided he was going to dump all the illegal  
36 fish.

37  
38 He kept a lot of other fish that weren't quite as illegal and  
39 passed that off as this is just a misunderstanding and the agent  
40 working with the officers, after a lot of follow-up interviews,  
41 was able to put together a case and take it before the grand  
42 jury and we have an indictment. I believe that one will be  
43 going to trial, but it's a very, very interesting case and a  
44 good collaborative effort on the part of the agencies.

45  
46 Pretty much that's all I have. We'll been sending in a report  
47 here shortly. We would like to get a legal review on this one  
48 before we submit it.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** The VMS is interesting, because I know some of  
3 the discussions after the event is that we do know where some of  
4 our boats are, so we do know they're not fishing in closed  
5 areas. The development of that in the future I think is going  
6 to be real important, whether it be VMS or GPS or whatever. Any  
7 other questions?

8  
9 **MR. BOYD:** Just a quick question. Do any of the agencies, state  
10 or federal, have the capability of utilizing satellite imagery  
11 to track vessels or just to look at the fishery?

12  
13 **MR. ROBBINS:** Not really. It can't help us unless we can see  
14 that people are in the act of fishing. We can see a vessel  
15 might be in a closed area, but we've still got to send somebody  
16 out there.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Anything else? Next on deck is Carmen.

19  
20 **USCG**

21  
22 **LCDR DEGEORGE:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. For the Coast Guard, I've  
23 got a pretty short brief here. I'll highlight a few things that  
24 are ongoing here, but just to point out, once again, that the  
25 Coast Guard is actively executing its eleven statutory missions,  
26 which include search and rescue, counterdrug, migrant  
27 interdiction, pollution response, ports and waterway security,  
28 and fisheries enforcement. We have a large gamut there.

29  
30 Even with that workload, it's interesting. I got some reports  
31 from Headquarters here. The Coast Guard expended 107,000  
32 resource hours this last fiscal year on fisheries enforcement  
33 and so it's definitely a high priority for the Coast Guard. I  
34 know my admiral is very interested in the Gulf of Mexico  
35 fisheries management plans and how we're doing and how we're  
36 supporting that and so it's definitely a high priority for us.

37  
38 Some of the big things we've got going on right now are the  
39 Deepwater Horizon closure, as I mentioned earlier. Twenty-two  
40 shrimp vessels to date and 200,000 pounds of shrimp returned to  
41 sea that we've interdicted inside. We continue to monitor that  
42 zone, using all types of capabilities, aircraft, surface craft,  
43 et cetera.

44  
45 We've got some new aircraft online that the Gulf of Mexico, I  
46 believe, is the only place in the Coast Guard that has them  
47 right now and that's the HC144 CASA and our aviation training  
48 center in Mobile has that fleet of aircraft and we get to use

1 them at our disposal.

2

3 It's kind of like a C130, but just a little smaller and it's a  
4 fantastic aircraft. It has great surveillance capabilities.  
5 It's got great legs. It can get way offshore and it can almost  
6 hover. It can get into a real slow spin and really just survey  
7 and area and so it's very beneficial to us and we've really  
8 liked it a lot. We've used it a lot with Deepwater Horizon.

9

10 Some of the other things we have going on, the extended  
11 recreational red snapper season. We're working really closely  
12 with some of our state partners, I know with Alabama and with  
13 Louisiana right now. We've got some operations going on with  
14 the states and that's going very well.

15

16 Some of the other things that are going on that we didn't really  
17 mention here and I'm surprised Robert didn't talk about some of  
18 these things, but our Southwest border is obviously a big deal  
19 for us. We have a lot of Mexican-flagged fishing vessels that  
20 come across and attempt to fish in our EEZ and that takes a lot  
21 of our attention.

22

23 We generally have several cutters down there and aircraft  
24 patrolling the outskirts of our EEZ, to keep a presence out  
25 there, because, on average -- I don't have an average here, but  
26 we have regular incursions by Mexican-flagged fishing vessels  
27 out there. The number I have here, just in Fiscal Year 2010, we  
28 had seventy detections of foreign fishing vessels operating in  
29 and around the border, either trying to set gear or we found  
30 gear just on our side.

31

32 We've also seized nine Mexican-flagged fishing vessels that have  
33 come across that we've caught fishing and we have seized those  
34 vessels. We work really closely with Robert and his guys down  
35 on the border and it works out really well.

36

37 Some of the other things we have going on, I'm sure many of you  
38 have heard about Falcon Lake, the international border down  
39 there. We have some fisheries challenges down there and we have  
40 a Coast Guard presence there periodically. We don't have unit  
41 that's assigned to Falcon Lake or Lake Amistad, but we do pulse  
42 ops down there with Texas Parks and Wildlife and Customs and  
43 Border Protection.

44

45 Ever since the recent shooting of the jet skier down there,  
46 we've really increased operations down there and once again,  
47 being multi-mission, we're looking at not only the counterdrug  
48 side and possible illegal immigration, but we're also looking at

1 the fisheries, where we'll have Mexican-flagged vessels come  
2 over on our side and fish.

3  
4 Some of the other things we're seeing down on the border,  
5 obviously there's always crewing issues on some of the  
6 commercial fishing vessels and illegal aliens. Then, lastly,  
7 just for a training issue, I don't know if the council knows,  
8 but we actually have a -- The Coast Guard actually has a  
9 regional fisheries training center. It's kind of like our  
10 boarding officer training center.

11  
12 That's located in New Orleans and actually, the commanding  
13 officer is in the back of the room. Ben Krebs is the commanding  
14 officer of our fisheries training center and we recently just  
15 realigned that. We put that under our Maritime Law Enforcement  
16 Academy, which is in Charleston, South Carolina.

17  
18 All of our fisheries training centers are realigning under our  
19 Law Enforcement Academy, to establish better consistency and  
20 such, but the bottom line is it will be seamless and transparent  
21 to everybody else, but it will be better training for our  
22 boarding officers and that's pretty much it, Mr. Chairman.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Any questions?

25  
26 **MR. TEEHAN:** I'm not on your committee, but, Carmen, when you  
27 seize a foreign-flagged vessel in United States waters, what is  
28 the outcome? Obviously it's not creating an international  
29 incident. Is there some agreement with Mexico?

30  
31 **LCDR DEGEORGE:** That's actually a good question. There is an  
32 agreement that we have with Mexico, specifically with CONAPESCA,  
33 which is Mexico's version of NOAA. We have specific guidelines  
34 as to how to handle that.

35  
36 It generally requires -- There's a process that happens behind  
37 the scenes, as we brief our headquarters and our State  
38 Department gets linked in, but there's a specific process to  
39 prevent an international incident from happening, but it is a  
40 significant event when we do have one, but it's a rather  
41 streamlined process, because it happens. Unfortunately, it  
42 happens frequently and so when we kick off that process, it's  
43 rather streamlined.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you. Any other questions?

46  
47 **MR. GOODRICH:** I want to apologize, first of all, because Carmen  
48 and I and all the Coast Guard people, we work very closely



1 together. It's kind of a whole different effort down there for  
2 us. Sometimes it's not just a fisheries thing. It's a border  
3 patrol and it's another nation and so we've got a whole  
4 different set of problems, but the Coast Guard works really well  
5 with us in that and we respond jointly in a lot of instances  
6 down there.

7  
8 The thing that's going on at Falcon Lake and Zapata County over  
9 there, I know you've all heard about it. We've got border ops  
10 out there all the time on that lake, but my suggestion is don't  
11 go fishing over there on that side. We had legislators come  
12 down with Coast Guard representatives and they've all looked at  
13 some of those border problems over there, but from a fisheries  
14 standpoint, we do get longline fishermen that come across in the  
15 Gulf and come out there and it's a joint effort for us to patrol  
16 that area and so we do work closely.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you. Any other questions for the Coast  
19 Guard? Hearing none, we'll move to Steve and his report on the  
20 IJF Program.

#### 21 22 **IJF PROGRAM ACTIVITY**

23  
24 **MR. VANDERKOOY:** I'm going try and make this relatively simple.  
25 I think most of the council members are familiar with the  
26 Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program, but for those who aren't,  
27 our primary function is to develop regional management plans for  
28 state water fish, fish that cross state boundaries either  
29 naturally or are landed across state boundaries.

30  
31 Our primary function is to generate the biological, habitat,  
32 fishery, economic, sociology, and stock assessment for various  
33 state species that are shared amongst any of the five Gulf  
34 states and are commercially and recreationally fished.

35  
36 With that, we're currently working on two documents. One is a  
37 revision to the Eastern Oyster Fishery Management Plan. We are  
38 also working on a biological profile for sand and silver sea  
39 trout, which collectively represents a common species that most  
40 fishermen just refer to as white trout.

41  
42 The way that our commission works, we form a task force which  
43 involves state representatives from each of the agencies, as  
44 well as expertise from the enforcement group, a recreational and  
45 commercial fishing representative, sometimes economics,  
46 sometimes sociology.

47  
48 In the case of our oyster plan, we also have FDA representation,

1 Department of Agriculture, and a couple of the states. It  
2 becomes a very large task, but we are in the final stages of  
3 completing both of those documents.  
4

5 This group here, the Law Enforcement Committee of the  
6 commission, actually provides representation to those task  
7 forces for us and they take information back to their committee,  
8 who in turn provides input to us as far as what recommendations  
9 may have enforcement issues that we may or may not have  
10 considered.  
11

12 Our recommendations are tools in the fisheries tool box that the  
13 states have available to them. They are not regulatory and they  
14 are not binding and I guess I'll let Robert talk briefly about  
15 the Oyster FMP, which he is our representative on that, and then  
16 I'll cover the profile.  
17

18 **MR. GOODRICH:** Thanks, Steve. As he said, that one is coming to  
19 an end, thank goodness. It's been a long process, but we really  
20 have worked closely with all the states. In doing that, one of  
21 the challenges is all the different agencies, the health  
22 departments, the biologists. That particular FMP is going to be  
23 very extensive.  
24

25 It's going to provide a lot of good information. In that  
26 section he talked about where we make suggestions and  
27 recommendations for future things, there's a lot of things in  
28 there that we in law enforcement got to add in there, things  
29 that we would like to see, like some cooperative efforts in  
30 training in the oyster area, as well as some of the vessel  
31 monitoring systems that might be incorporated into that area.  
32 We felt like oysters would be a great place to do that.  
33

34 We got a chance, through the opportunity of participation, to  
35 add some of that into this FMP. Again, it's just a suggestion  
36 in those areas, but we also got to look at what was enforceable  
37 and when we got into certain areas, we talked about that and  
38 then also what should be in there when it comes out, as most  
39 current as we can, the regulations and the history of those  
40 regulations from each state in the oyster industry.  
41

42 If you look that over, it's quite extensive on where we started  
43 out in the oyster industry and where we are now and so we got to  
44 be a part of that and I think it's going to be a good project.  
45

46 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Robert. Any questions? Hearing  
47 none, we'll move on. Rick, you're up. Hold on one second.  
48

1 MR. SAPP: I don't think we've quite finished that report.

2  
3 CHAIRMAN PEARCE: I'm moving too quick. I'm getting hungry.

4  
5 MR. VANDERKOOY: I understand. On the trout profile, Walter  
6 Chataginer from Mississippi serves as our representative on that  
7 task force. The profile is a little bit different from the FMP,  
8 in that it does not have a stock assessment. It is initially  
9 just kind of an overview of the biology and habitat.

10  
11 It's often a species that we don't have enough fishery-dependent  
12 or independent data to really do a formal stock assessment, but  
13 it gives us the starting point for future management, should the  
14 fishery itself change over time and so that we are in the  
15 process of completing also.

16  
17 We have our final two meetings. Oyster will be wrapped up the  
18 first of December and our final editing session is scheduled for  
19 Galveston and in the middle of January, we'll be meeting in New  
20 Orleans with our trout folks to wrap that one up and then our  
21 review process will begin through next year and that's it.

22  
23 CHAIRMAN PEARCE: All right, Steve, and thank you. Any  
24 questions? Hearing none, Rick, you're up.

25  
26 **STATUS REPORT ON GULF COUNCIL ACTIVITIES**  
27 **REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S ACTION SCHEDULE**  
28

29 DR. LEARD: I'll kind of go over Item IX and X kind of together.  
30 IX is really kind of status of activities that the council has  
31 pretty much either finished or whatnot and they're moving their  
32 way through the approval process and X is kind of our schedule  
33 of what's going on.

34  
35 First of all, with king mackerel and Spanish mackerel, the  
36 council requested, and National Marine Fisheries Service has  
37 approved, a new control date of June 30, 2009. This was based  
38 on the council's desire to at least look at maybe moving forward  
39 with a limited access privilege program and it just puts  
40 fishermen on notice that if they aren't participating in the  
41 fishery that they may not be allowed to after that date, if the  
42 council moves forward with additional things.

43  
44 Reef Fish Amendment 31 became effective May 26 of 2010. This  
45 was the amendment due to the longline catch of sea turtles and  
46 it moved the longline boundary off of Florida out to thirty-five  
47 fathoms from June through August 31 of each year and also  
48 limited the number of hooks to 1,000 per vessel and only 750

1 could be fished.  
2  
3 Also, for red snapper, I believe there was an extension of the  
4 recreational season due to the oil spill and a lack of effort  
5 and also, the council is considering a regulatory amendment to  
6 set the total allowable catch for 2011 and it would be slightly  
7 higher than what it is this year, but that's still pending the  
8 council's approval.  
9  
10 For amberjack, we're also looking at an amendment that's pending  
11 council approval that would set recreational closed seasons for  
12 amberjack. It looks like, I believe this year, and Steve or  
13 somebody can correct me if I'm wrong, but it looks like the  
14 commercial season, because of reduced effort from the oil spill,  
15 will go until the end of the year.  
16  
17 For Reef Fish Amendment 32, this primarily deals with gag  
18 grouper and there were some problems with that assessment and  
19 it's going to be rerun shortly and probably right after the  
20 first of the year we should have that assessment and we'll  
21 probably move forward with completing Amendment 32 that would,  
22 again, primarily address gag.  
23  
24 The council recently addressed buoy gear and redefining that and  
25 I believe that has been done and I believe that's in the system.  
26 Also, the council has developed a regulatory amendment to reduce  
27 the red grouper TAC in 2011 to 5.68 million pounds. I believe  
28 that's all for that.  
29  
30 The council has to set annual catch limits and accountability  
31 measures for all the species that aren't undergoing overfishing  
32 or are overfished and we're doing that through several  
33 processes.  
34  
35 One is a generic amendment that will handle virtually all of the  
36 reef fish that aren't currently covered by some plan to have  
37 those. We expect that that amendment will go to public hearings  
38 early next year and be finalized either in April or in June.  
39 The same thing is true with a coastal migratory pelagics  
40 amendment for king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia.  
41 That's in Amendment 18 and, again, it's on pretty much the same  
42 track, to be approved for public hearings probably in February  
43 and then final action in June.  
44  
45 The same thing is also true with spiny lobster. That's an  
46 amendment that's a joint amendment with the South Atlantic  
47 Council. Again, it's on that same schedule for final action in  
48 June.

1  
2 Again, like I said, we're also possibly looking at latent  
3 permits, which may be either in Amendment 20 to the Coastal  
4 Migratory Pelagics FMP and possibly a LAPP program, but, again,  
5 those won't be moving forward until at least some time early to  
6 mid next year. I believe that's it, Mr. Chairman.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** That includes both of your reports and so are  
9 there any questions? Hearing none, there's a few things before  
10 we get to the Other Business. Ed, I think you had a motion you  
11 wanted to discuss?

12  
13 **MR. SAPP:** Yes. Unfortunately, there's not anything we can do  
14 to help solve the problems that the states and the JEA are  
15 dealing with with funding, but the small amount that we can do  
16 that won't cost anything and nobody will construe it as being a  
17 lobbying effort is to send a letter on behalf of the council and  
18 I request that we do that.

19  
20 The motion would be to request that staff write a letter on the  
21 council's behalf to NOAA Administrator Dr. Lubchenco in support  
22 of the cooperative program between JEA and the state fisheries  
23 law enforcement agencies.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** I'll second it. Any discussion of the letter?

26  
27 **MR. SIMPSON:** I think it might be useful, because as I've  
28 mentioned in other forums about some of the problems that  
29 they're having in enforcement in other regions, I've told them  
30 we don't have the same problems in the Gulf. We have a good  
31 working relationship and not to say we don't have a few issues,  
32 but it may do some good on another front.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Thank you, Larry. Any other discussion or  
35 questions?

36  
37 **MR. SAPP:** Just instruction to staff. I read the letter from  
38 the South Atlantic Council and it's well written and it's got  
39 something that's specific to South Carolina, but you can use  
40 that as a model to base ours on and it ought to be pretty easy.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** Any other questions?

43  
44 **DR. LEARD:** I believe we wrote a letter a year ago or so to  
45 Admiral Lautenbacher that was the same sort of thing, but it  
46 needs to be -- I agree it needs to be reiterated and so we've  
47 got one, too.

1 CHAIRMAN PEARCE: Thank you. No other questions or discussion?  
2 All in favor say aye. It passes. Bill, I think you wanted the  
3 floor for a few minutes before we finish it off.

4  
5 MR. TEEHAN: I just wanted to take this opportunity to  
6 acknowledge the hard work that the law enforcement folks from  
7 all branches, federal and state, did during the recent Deepwater  
8 Horizon incident and that your work did not go unnoticed and we  
9 certainly do appreciate it and I think I speak for the council  
10 when I say that.

11  
12 CHAIRMAN PEARCE: I think we all echo that and we're sure glad  
13 that you came. Now, in Other Business, we're going to go to  
14 Election of Officers and, Steve, you're going to handle that?

15  
16 OTHER BUSINESS  
17 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

18  
19 MR. VANDERKOOY: Actually, the commission is not going to  
20 require election at this time. We have a two-year rotation and  
21 we're in the middle of that right now and so we're going to  
22 leave things the way they are, but, Rick, you need a LEAP  
23 election?

24  
25 CHAIRMAN PEARCE: So Jeff gets the honor for another year then?  
26 Okay.

27  
28 DR. LEARD: Tiny is not here and who is vice chair? Is it  
29 Chris? It's Robert. Robert is vice chair and I think what we  
30 agreed to do is -- We don't have a vice chair?

31  
32 CHAIRMAN PEARCE: Anything else on the election? Is that it?

33  
34 DR. LEARD: I guess we might have to put this off until the  
35 March meeting.

36  
37 CHAIRMAN PEARCE: That's fine. Any other business to come  
38 before this committee?

39  
40 MR. DUNN: I just wanted to add one thing. During some of the  
41 discussions, they talked about ability to ask enforcement  
42 questions from the public and the council and I just wanted to  
43 let everyone know we're always at these after hours, open forum  
44 discussions and we'll take any questions at that time, to take  
45 the heat off of Roy.

46  
47 CHAIRMAN PEARCE: I think we want to formalize it a little more  
48 than that and I think we want to do a --

1  
2 **MR. DUNN:** All right, but we're always there if there are  
3 additional questions to be asked.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN PEARCE:** I understand. All right, is there any other  
6 questions or any other business before this committee? Hearing  
7 none, we're adjourned.

8  
9 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m., October 28,  
10 2010.)

11  
12 - - -  
13

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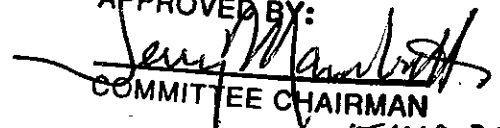


TABLE OF MOTIONS

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2  
3 PAGE 18: Motion to recommend to full council that at either the  
4 February or April meeting to schedule a workshop to include  
5 council members and members of law enforcement. The motion  
6 carried on page 20.  
7  
8 PAGE 38: Motion to approve the operations plan. The motion  
9 carried on page 38.  
10  
11 PAGE 76: Motion to request that staff write a letter on the  
12 council's behalf to NOAA Administrator Dr. Lubchenco in support  
13 of the cooperative program between JEA and the state fisheries  
14 law enforcement agencies. The motion carried on page 77.  
15  
16

- - -

**S-FFMC MENHADEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
Tuesday, October 19, 2010  
Clearwater Beach, Florida**

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
15 MAR 2011

**B. Wallace** called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. with the following in attendance:

**Members**

Ron Lukens, Omega Protein, Inc., Gainesville, FL  
Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA  
Mike "Buck" Buchanan, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Joe Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC  
Rick Schillaci, Omega Protein, Inc., Moss Point, MS  
John Mareska, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL

**Others**

Joe Shepard, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Corky Perret, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Elizabeth Scott-Denton, NMFS – SEFSC, Galveston, TX  
Frank Helies, GSAFF, Tampa, FL  
Ben Landry, Omega Protein, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA  
Ronnie Luster, CCA, Houston, TX  
Tommy Williams, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA

**Staff**

Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dave Donaldson, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Debbie McIntyre, Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, RecFIN Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS  
Jeff Rester, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Alex Miller, Staff Economist, Ocean Springs, MS

**Introductions**

**Chairman Wallace** led the introductions of the MAC and the audience.

**Approval of Agenda**

*Shepard moved that the agenda be approved with minor rearranging by the Chair, Lukens seconded and the motion passed.*

### Approval of Minutes (March 8, 2010)

*Mareska moved to accept the minutes as written, Smith seconded and the minutes were approved.*

### Update on the 2010 Gulf Menhaden Season

**Smith** reported on the 2010 gulf menhaden season to date. He reported that the closure of most of the federal and state waters throughout the summer, because of the Deepwater Horizon disaster, reduced the effort and landings during the prime fishing time. **Smith** indicated that the 2010 landings were currently down 33% from 2009 for equivalent time and down 30% from the five-year average for the same time period.

**Smith** reported that while April started strong, the catches in July and August were off by 30-40%. Closed fishing areas forced the fleet to fish off western Louisiana for much of the summer. However, even with the reduction, **Smith** indicated that October's landings have been good and he projects around 350,000 MT to be landed in the Gulf by the end of the season on November 1.

Since effort was down significantly, **Smith** examined vessel-days (days in which at least one set was actually made) rather than vessel-ton-weeks to compare this season to the last few. In 2010, sets were made on only 51% of the available fishing days; as compared to sets made on 64 to 75% of available fishing days during the past three years. In 2010, during approximately 30% of the available days, the vessels did not leave the dock and on 19% of the days, the vessels went to sea, but never made a set. Associated with the area closures, was the fact that the FAA prohibited spotter aircraft from flying over certain areas in the northern Gulf because of the oil spill. At this time, **Smith** does not feel confident enough to make any landings forecast projections for next year and would wait until March for any forecasting.

### 2010 Review of the Texas Cap

**Smith** indicated that industry and TPWD reporting seems to be working well to monitor the effort and landings in Texas waters. At this time, it appears that the industry will not come near the 35M lb TAC. As of last week, removals from Texas waters amounted to only about 60% of the cap from Texas waters.

### Deepwater Horizon Follow-up

**Larry Simpson** presented the overview of the ODRP program and how the menhaden port sampling would be included in the \$10M set aside for stock assessment enhancement.

It was pointed out by the committee that the current fishery independent sampling programs in the states and SEAMAP were not designed to accurately assess menhaden recruitment. There is a need for a steady, long-term source of monies to properly fund a juvenile sampling program to help the gulf menhaden stock assessments in the future. The group was reminded that a sampling protocol was developed last year by **Rester, Lukens**, and members of the SEAMAP Subcommittee to replicate Ahrenholz (NMFS Beaufort) work across the northern Gulf in the late

1970s and early 1980s. The proposed sampling would specifically target juvenile menhaden in the coastal river systems. The protocol was approved by the MAC, but there was no funding to initiate the survey so it was shelved. All agreed that a dedicated fishery-independent program was required and now was the time to begin funding and implementing it.

### **Update on the Atlantic Menhaden Fishery**

**Smith** reported that the assessment for Atlantic menhaden was completed earlier this year. The Peer Review Panel cited the need for alternate biological reference points for future assessments. Landings along the Atlantic in 2010 have increased over 2009 by 30% and 23% over the last five-year average. Ten reduction vessels are fishing from the menhaden factory in Virginia; numerous bait boats also harvested Atlantic menhaden in Virginia and New Jersey waters. Much of the bait landed in NJ is being sold in New England to fill the demand for lobster bait since New England herring quotas have been reduced. **Smith** anticipates that through December, the Atlantic landings for reduction should be around 175,000 MT.

### **Marine Fisheries Observer Programs at the NOAA Fisheries Galveston Laboratory**

**Elizabeth Scott-Denton**, NOAA Fisheries Galveston, reported to the committee on NOAA's voluntary, on-board observer program. NOAA would like to include the menhaden fishery in this program, but it requires specific Coast Guard safety certification prior to allowing any observers on a vessel as well as additional insurance on the part of the industry. **Scott-Denton** is working with the industry to look at the possibility of getting reduction vessels included in the program.

### **2011 Gulf Menhaden SEDAR and FMP Revision**

**VanderKooy** presented an overview of the SEDAR program and the gulf menhaden stock assessment planned for 2011. At this time, the Sustainable Fisheries Branch at NMFS Beaufort still plan to head-up the assessment, but the SEDAR framework will be used. The Commission will be scheduling and funding the data and assessment workshops in March and July of 2011. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council will fund the review workshop sometime in late November or early December.

The data workshop will take place during the Commission's spring meeting as a separate two-day session. The Commission will host an assessment symposium between the MAC meeting and the data workshop.

**VanderKooy** and **Smith** will be working next year on the next revision to the Gulf Menhaden FMP concurrent with the assessment in hopes of completing both around the same time.

After much additional discussion addressing the need for more fishery-independent data specifically targeting menhaden, **Lukens made the following motion:** *Recognizing the need for better recruitment data for juvenile menhaden and recognizing funding is available for enhancement of fishery independent data collection from the Deepwater Horizon disaster, the MAC moves that appropriate funding be made available to develop and establish a fishery-*

*independent survey for juvenile menhaden in the Gulf of Mexico. Smith seconded the motion which passed unanimously.*

### **Gulf Menhaden Website**

**VanderKooy** reported briefly on the updated draft website. It was agreed that, upon making a couple of minor editorial changes noted in the MAC's review of the website, the website should be launched to replace the current version.

### **Election of Chairman**

Finally, the chairmanship rotates to the states in 2011 and in absentia Texas was nominated and approved. **Jerry Mambretti**, or the appropriate representative, will take the gavel at the March 2011 meeting.

### **Other Business**

**With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:35 am.**

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, October 27 – Thursday, October 28, 2010**

APPROVED BY:  
*Ron Lukens*  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
11/2/2010

On Wednesday, October 27, 2010, Chairman **Ron Lukens** called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The meeting began with introductions of the Panel members and guests. The following were in attendance:

**Members & Proxies**

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  
Scott Hardin, FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Tallahassee, FL  
Leslie Hartman, TPWD, Palacios, TX  
Jeffrey Herod, FWS, Atlanta, GA  
Rebecca Hillebrant, LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries, Baton Rouge, LA  
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  
Herb Kumpf, At-Large Member, Panama City, FL  
Susan McCarthy, FDA, Dauphin Island, AL  
Don MacLean, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services  
Ron Lukens, At-Large Member, High Springs, FL  
Chris Page, SC Department of Natural Resources, Social Circle, SC  
Steve Rider, AL Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, Montgomery, AL  
Dennis Riecke, MDWFP, Jackson, FL  
Don Schmitz, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL  
John Teem, FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, FL  
Keith Weaver, GDNR, Social Circle, GA

**Staff**

Alyce R. Catchot, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Pamela Schofield, U.S. Geological Survey, Gainesville, FL  
Tonya Shearer, Georgia Institute of Technology

### Public Comment

Chairman **Ron Lukens** provided the opportunity for public comment. No public comments were received.

### Review & Adoption of Agenda

**E. Chilton** asked that his presentation scheduled for Thursday, October 28<sup>th</sup> at 8:40 a.m. to be switched with **L. Hartman's** presentation, which was scheduled for Wednesday, October 27<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m. **Chairman Lukens moved to adopt the modified agenda and the motion carried unanimously.**

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### Overview of the Orange Cup Coral Invasion

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**Shearer** reported that in some areas of its extended range, *T. coccinea* is locally abundant, accounting for >80% coverage of some habitats. It readily settles on newly available artificial substrates where it is often one of the most abundant species, exhibiting high survivorship and growth rates. In Florida, *T. coccinea* is commonly abundant on steel vessels, including unintentionally wrecked vessels and those deployed as artificial reef habitats or mitigation reefs. In South Florida, Florida Keys and Dry Tortugas, artificial reef sites were surveyed for the coral between August 2006 and December 2009. Hundreds to thousands of colonies were observed at a majority of these sites. Other investigators and recreational divers have made additional observations. **Shearer** reported that plans have been made to confirm these observations in 2010-2011. In total, 20 *T. coccinea* populations have been confirmed and 11 are likely but

**GULF & SOUTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL PANEL  
ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES  
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, October 27 – Thursday, October 28, 2010**

On Wednesday, October 27, 2010, Chairman **Ron Lukens** called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The meeting began with introductions of the Panel members and guests. The following were in attendance:

**Members & Proxies**

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  
Scott Hardin, FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Tallahassee, FL  
Leslie Hartman, TPWD, Palacios, TX  
Jeffrey Herod, FWS, Atlanta, GA  
Rebecca Hillebrant, LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries, Baton Rouge, LA  
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  
Herb Kumpf, At-Large Member, Panama City, FL  
Susan McCarthy, FDA, Dauphin Island, AL  
Don MacLean, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services  
Ron Lukens, At-Large Member, High Springs, FL  
Chris Page, SC Department of Natural Resources, Social Circle, SC  
Steve Rider, AL Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, Montgomery, AL  
Dennis Riecke, MDWFP, Jackson, FL  
Don Schmitz, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL  
John Teem, FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, FL  
Keith Weaver, GDNR, Social Circle, GA

**Staff**

Alyce R. Catchot, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Pamela Schofield, U.S. Geological Survey, Gainesville, FL  
Tonya Shearer, Georgia Institute of Technology



### Public Comment

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2010-2011. In total, 20 *T. coccinea* populations have been confirmed and 11 are likely but unconfirmed. This species also inhabits at least two limestone mitigation reefs in Florida (Port of Miami and Bal Harbor), but it has not yet been observed on natural reef substrate in Florida. This species did not inhabit five artificial habitats that were investigated in the lower Florida Keys and Dry Tortugas. In the Gulf of Mexico, *T. coccinea* has been documented on the East Flower Garden Bank, Geyer Bank and various oil platforms in the area. *T. coccinea* thrives on oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico, where it was first identified in 1991. These platforms are likely to facilitate the spread of this species throughout the Gulf of Mexico which has led to the colonization of natural substrate of nearby banks.

*T. coccinea* and its congener *T. tagusensis* are highly toxic and produce allelopathic chemicals that are toxic to neighboring native corals. Extracts from *Tubastraea* species inhibit settlement of non-conspecific coral larvae and other fouling organisms. A recent study suggests crude extracts from *Tubastraea* in Brazil also deter predation from generalist fish predators.

These species are increasing in abundance while all other corals in the Caribbean have suffered significant declines. Population sizes and geographic range has expanded since 2002. These fouling species competes with other sessile organisms for space, and their natural predator, the gastropod *Asperiscula (Epitonium) billeanum*, has not been documented in the Caribbean or Gulf of Mexico. Natural reef communities may be negatively impacted if this invader thrives and outcompetes native Caribbean species. **Shearer** reported that their observations on several wrecks in South Florida and the Florida Keys indicate that this species frequently colonizes bivalve shells. In April 2010, the sandy ocean floor surrounding the Ancient Mariner wreck (Broward County, Florida) was littered with *T. coccinea* colonies growing on bivalve shells. One concern regarding growth of the coral on bivalve shells is the potential transported to natural reef habitats during storm activity once the shell has become detached.

**Shearer** reported that to their knowledge, there are no existing efforts to prevent or control *T. coccinea* in its introduced range, aside from those at the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) and along the Brazilian coastline. Sanctuary personnel have actively removed *T. coccinea* colonies inhabiting natural substrate on Geyer Bank in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico in an effort to protect the native communities within the FGBNMS. In Brazil, a program to control and eradicate this species was implemented: (<http://www.biologiauerj.com/noticias/50-noticias/191-centro-de-visitantes-do-projeto-coral-sol-inaugurado-na-vila-do-abraao-ilha-grande>). The success of each effort is unknown. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Artificial Reefs program has observed *T. coccinea* populations on artificial reef habitats in Florida. Program staff members are considering whether certain substrates, such as steel-hulled ships, are indeed facilitating the spread of this species and whether this type of artificial substrate should be used for future reef construction.

**Shearer** reported that *T. taguensis* was introduced through the Panama Canal and is endemic to Galapagos. It is also present in the Gulf of Mexico and is abundant on oil platforms. The population sizes have significantly increased since 2002 and are dominated by a single clone. In October 2010, the first observations on natural substrates were found on the West and East Flower Garden Banks. *T. taguensis* was observed at 7 out of 8 dive sites at the FGBNMS, but

was never encountered during a rapid coral survey simultaneously on the same reefs. **Shearer** reported that it could be present on natural substrate in Florida, but common survey methods do not detect these species. **Shearer** also reported that *T. micranthus* which is a sympatric Indo-Pacific *Tubastraea* species that has been introduced into Brazil has also been identified on an oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico.

#### **Ad Hoc Orange Cup Coral Work Group Activities**

**T. Shearer** presented a report on *Tubastraea coccinea*. **T. Jackson** asked if the paper could be made electronically available as a PDF. **R. Lukens** asked that the paper also be made available to the Gulf Council for their records. **D. Knott** asked that it be included in the paper that the coral is also endemic to the Galapagos Islands. **Shearer** also stated that she would include her observations on natural substrates in the Gulf of Mexico. **Shearer** reported that the coral species could now be off the coast of Georgia as well, and they plan to investigate. **Jackson** asked if there was possible hybridization in Florida. **Shearer** stated that their genetic information suggested that there is and that they will look more intently at the findings. Brazil has a project for removing the coral species from their reefs wherein the villagers collect them, make crafts from them, and sell the crafts.

**R. Lukens** asked **Shearer** how far up the Atlantic the coral might go. **Shearer** stated that she could not say, but if the coral is spotted she will be informed of their presence and then add it to the site list. **Lukens** asked **Shearer** for a time frame on when she would have the revised document available. **Shearer** stated that she would work on it that week. **Lukens** stated that he would draft a transmittal letter to send out for approval by the counsel. **Lukens** thanked **Shearer** for sharing her expertise and that her presentation has certainly raised the general coral issue.

#### **How the GSARP Fits in with Marine Spatial Planning**

**P. Carangelo** gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "What, Who, Where, How, Why and When – Marine Spatial Planning aka CMSP". **Carangelo** compared two ocean policy approaches; President Bush's Ocean Action Plan and President Obama's new Ocean Policy. **Carangelo** reported that when President Obama instituted a national ocean policy for the United States this year, his administration described it as the first comprehensive, integrated policy for stewardship of the country's coasts and oceans. However, it is not the first presidential initiative to try to coordinate US ocean policy. In December of 2004, former President George W. Bush instituted an Ocean action Plan, consisting of 88 action items that responded to recommendations from a national commission on ocean policy. The action items were diverse, pertaining to fisheries, MPAs, invasive species, watershed management, marine transportation, research, and more. The first item on the list was the creation of a Cabinet-level committee on ocean policy to coordinate the activities of federal departments on ocean-related matters. In 2008, at the end of his second and final term in office, President Bush announced that 87 of the 88 action items had been achieved (all except Congressional approval of the UN Law of the Sea Treaty). **Carangelo** stated that the respective efforts of Presidents Bush and Obama offer a contrast in how ocean policy can be crafted. President Bush said his Ocean Action Plan was about "setting clear goals and meeting those goals", and his policy amounted to the sum of its discrete parts (e.g., "Establish mandatory

ballast water management program”, “Promote international sea turtle conservation”). The Bush Ocean Action Plan can be found online at: <http://depts.washington.edu/meam/BushOAP.pdf>. In comparison, the Obama policy aims to provide an overarching framework within which future planning of US ocean use and conservation may occur.

The Obama Executive Order establishing the New National Ocean Policy can be found online at: [www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/oceans](http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/oceans).

### **New National Ocean Policy**

**Carangelo** reported that the White House has issued an Executive Order on Stewardship of the Ocean, Our Coasts and the Great Lakes, adopting many of the recommendations viewed online at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/files/documents/OPTF\\_FinalResc.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/files/documents/OPTF_FinalResc.pdf). The order was published on July 19, 2010 and establishes a national policy to:

- Ensure protection, maintenance and restoration of the health of ocean, coastal and Great Lakes ecosystems and resources
- Enhance sustainability of ocean and coastal economies
- Preserve maritime heritage and support sustainable uses and access
- Provide for adaptive management to enhance understanding of and capacity to respond to climate change and ocean acidification
- Coordinate actions with national security and foreign policy interests
- Develop spatial plans to assist decision-making and planning processes at all government levels
- Establish a National Ocean Council, to be co-chaired by the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy and the chairman of the Council on environmental Quality

The Executive Order can be viewed online at:

[www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/oceans](http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/oceans). The Executive Order states that “The term ‘coastal and marine spatial planning’ means a comprehensive, adaptive, integrated, ecosystem-based, and transparent spatial planning process, based on sound science, for analyzing current and anticipated uses of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes areas.”

**Carangelo** stated that invasive species are a part of Coastal Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP). In the *Task Force Recommendations* publication on page 12, it states that “The introduction of non-invasive species can carry significant ecological and economic cost”. On page 38 of Areas of Special Interest, non-invasive species are listed. **Carangelo** reported that The Plan should address impacts of invasive species on ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems, and range of methodologies for control and prevention of these species. Section 8 states that “Regional Advisory Committees shall be established for each regional planning body”. Two of the nine regional planning areas encompass the GSARP the Gulf of Mexico Region (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama & Florida) and the South Atlantic Region (Florida, Georgia, South North Carolina & North Carolina).

**Carangelo** reported that there are lots of ways for ANS and Regional entities to be included into CMSP activities. He presented the following questions for consideration:

- Is CMSP directly relevant to your day-to-day responsibilities?

- Are you in the CMSP loop?
- Are you directly in your “state coastal management” loop?
- Who is/would be your CMSP “lead”?
- Is anything active in your region or state on CMSP?
- Is GCARP the appropriate regional entity for consideration, or is this the member State or Agency or Member initiative?

### **USFWS Southeast Regional Office ANS Program/ANS Hotline & Lionfish**

**J. Herod** gave a PowerPoint Presentation entitled, “USFWS Fisheries Program Southeast Region 2010 Update on *Aquatic Invasive Species Program*. **Herod** explained that the objectives for the ANS Program are Communication, Cooperation, Collaboration, Opportunities and Partnerships. He reported that Invasive Species, and specifically Aquatic Invasive Species, continue to impact economies, ecology, and human health. There is a need for continued support. The Region has partnerships to deal with aspects of invasive species. Four state ANS plans received support and eight states in the Southeastern US received project support.

Universities, Federal Partners and States are working on the following projects:

- Detection and Prevention
  - Monitor/Inspect watercraft and boat trailers
  - Informed surveillance
  - Communicate detections (ANS Hotline: 877-STOP-ANS)

**Herod** stated that they are working to promote the hotline. They have operators 24/7 who take the reports, then send out emails. The response turnaround time is usually 24 hours.

  - Safeguard priority pathways through risk management (e.g., HACCP)
  - eDNA (Early detection)
  - ROVs (Remotely Operated Vehicles)

**Herod** reported that the ROVs are not only looking for known invasive species, but also unidentified species. The ROVs are beneficial in the fight against invasive species.
- Specific Species/Risk Assessments/Physiological Tolerances
  - Species tolerances
  - Test all bio-security elements on a suite of species (e.g., Lionfish)
  - Pathway/Vector assessment
- Economics
- Control strategies
  - State ANS Coordinators and Invasive Species Plans/Strategies
- Outreach/Education
  - Watercraft Inspection Training: <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/regs/images/boattrailer.gif>

**Herod** reported that there are many values of HACCP:

- HACCP is a tool that can help reduce the risk of moving invasive species unintentionally
- HACCP is pathway focused
- The HACCP process can be useful for many activities such as field sampling, site visits, road and trail maintenance

- There are future opportunities for implementing HACCP within Natural Resource Agency programs

### **Lionfish Update**

**P. Schofield** reported that Lionfish expansion in the Gulf of Mexico is massive. In January, 2009, there was only one Lionfish spotted in the Florida Keys, one off the coast of St. Petersburg, Florida and none in the Gulf of Mexico. By December, 2009, the Florida Keys were inundated with Lionfish. There were also two fish found in one location off of the Yucatan coast. In July, 2010, three fish were photographed and collected North of Tortugas. Three more fish in three different locations were collected off of the North Yucatan coast. Most of these were collected by fishermen. In August, 2010, two fish in two different locations were found off the Manatee County Coast, and one fish found off of the Pinellas county coast. There was an unsubstantiated report of Lionfish off a South Timbalier oil/gas platform. In September, 2010, two more fish were found off the Coast of Pinellas County and eleven more fish off the North side of the Yucatan coast. Eight fish were found in the Northern Gulf of Mexico; One on reef balls off of Pensacola, FL; one on Army tank SSE Dauphin Island, AL; four off of an oil/gas platform South of Louisiana; two off of Sonnier Bank. In October, 2010, there were even more Lionfish in the Gulf of Mexico and one off Apalachicola, Florida. **Schofield** stated that there will be a lot more Lionfish sightings in the future.

**Schofield** reported on the Florida Keys Lionfish Derbies that were held in 2010. In September, 2010, the Key Largo Lionfish Rodeo was held. There were 21 teams that collected a total of 534 Lionfish. The winning team collected 111 Lionfish. In October, 2010, the Marathon Lionfish Rodeo was held. There were 3 teams that collected a total of 30 Lionfish. The Lionfish were measured and weighed at each of the Rodeos. **Schofield** stated that the boat Captains were given maps and asked to circle on the maps the locations where the Lionfish were found. In November, 2010, there is a Key West Lionfish Rodeo scheduled. For more information on the derbies, go to [www.reef.otg/lionfish/derbies](http://www.reef.otg/lionfish/derbies).

**Schofield** presented news from **J. Morris** and NOAA. A Lionfish Working Group was formed in September, 2010 by NOAA that has representatives from all line offices. **Morris** is working closely with the State Department on international issues on Lionfish. The first international workshop on Lionfish took place in August, 2010 in Cancun, Mexico and established a framework for Lionfish best management practices. The creation of a manual is in progress and is being coordinated by **J. Morris**. The "NOAA - Eat Lionfish Campaign" is bringing increased attention to the issue domestically.

**Schofield** reported on two new species that have been documented off Boca Raton in Southeast Florida. The White-streaked Grouper (*Epinephelus ongus*) was found in August, 2010. The Clown Triggerfish (*Balistoides conspicillum*) was found in September, 2010.

### Update on New Introductions

**P. Fuller** reported that Asian Tiger Shrimp are back. Five were found in Louisiana, one in South Carolina and one in Florida. **Fuller** reported that the origin of the Tiger Shrimp was not known, but it is speculated that they are from the West Coast of Africa. Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) was found in April, 2010 in Marshall County, Mississippi in the Little Tallahatchie River and also in Coastal Harrison County, Mississippi. Black Carp (*Mylopharyngodon piceus*) was found in July, 2010 in the Lower Mississippi River in Baton Rouge, LA. Clown Triggerfish (*Balistoides conspicillum*) and White-streaked Grouper (*Epinephelus ongus*) were found in September in Southeast Florida. Bighead Carp (*Hypophthalmichthys noblis*) was found in September in Marion County, Texas in Caddo Lake. In other areas of the United States, Zebra Mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) were found in October, 2010 to be in numerous locations in Connecticut. Redtail Catfish (*Phractocephalus hemioliopterus*) was found in October, 2010 in Stewart County, Tennessee in the Lower Cumberland River. An Octopus (*Octopus sp.*) was found in October, 2010 in Garfield County, Colorado in the Colorado Headwaters-Plateau. Chinese Pond Mussels (*Sinanodonta Woodiana*) were found in September, 2010 in Hunterdon County, New Jersey in the Middle Delaware-Musconetcong River.

### Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force Update

**D. McLean** reported that the Task Force has an online guideline that can be opened as a PDF. An organization's logo can be put on the guideline for field work purposes. **McLean** stated that there is an upcoming Task Force meeting November 3-4, 2010 in Arlington Virginia that is open to anyone. **McLean** stated that the Task Force Strategic Plan will be discussed. The Plan was developed but not too much was done with it, so the Task Force wants to revamp it. Also to be discussed is the Risk Analysis Protocol, which will have new protocols in 2010. **McLean** reported that the Recreational Guidelines, created in 1999, also needs updating and revamping. These guidelines evolved into the *Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers* Program. The guidelines are posted on the website.

### Invasive Species Advisory Committee Update

**E. Chilton** reported that the Committee is continuing in their plans for management of Invasive Species and made a new recommendation that the National Invasive Species Council support a communication network in collaboration with the National Conference of State Legislators among the states' Invasive Species Councils.

### Texas's White-List and Associated Regulations

**E. Chilton** gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Implementation of Revisions to Exotic Aquatic Plant Regulations". **Chilton** explained that the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department has regulatory authority over the importation, possession, sale or placement into water of the state of exotic harmful or potentially harmful aquatic plants. Some exotic aquatic plants have been identified as harmful or potentially harmful. The sale, purchase or possession of these plants is prohibited. Prohibited plants may be possessed with a permit (such as water spinach). Permits have conditions to minimize environmental risk. **Chilton** reported that there are disadvantages

of the current system. Adding new plants is a lengthy process which makes it difficult to respond to new threats, and non-listed species may become established before they can be listed. This can lead to environmental damage and economic costs.

**Chilton** discussed the risk assessments, which include a history of the species in Texas, a history of invasiveness and length of time since first introduced, control techniques and efficacy, the economic benefits, environmental and agricultural impact if invasive species are established, and the native range and climate. **Chilton** defined an Aquatic Plant as any member of the Kingdom Plantae that is typically found in either aquatic or riparian habitats. This was documented using the most recent posting of the Integrated Taxonomic Information System.

**Chilton** reported that currently there is an approved list of 200 invasive species, a list of 107 native and naturalized species (exempt), a list of 6 primarily terrestrial species (exempt), a list of 38 invalid names, a list of 19 species for which they lack sufficient information, a list of 58 species that have been reviewed and rejected, 69 species still pending, and a list of ineligible species. **Chilton** reported that there are issues regarding some vascular plants (*Colocasia esculenta*, *Nelumbo nucifera*, *Nymphaea spp.*, and *Oryza sativa*) such as economic importance.

**Chilton** reported that the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department will continue development of a draft list and risk analyses, continue to solicit input from individuals and industry, begin review of exotic species permit applications when new rules are adopted, and modify draft regulations as necessary. On January 26-27, 2011, Commission meetings will be held to discuss public input and vote on proposed rules.

**Chilton** reported that all plants on the draft list (with the exception of microalgae) are being evaluated for potential risk to aquatic environments using a scientific risk analysis based on Pheloung et al. (1999). If a plant has a low risk of invasiveness, it will be placed on the approved list. Permits for possession of some plants will be maintained. **Chilton** explained the definitions of some earlier discussed items. Exotic aquatic plants are defined as non-indigenous aquatic plants not normally found in Texas and include vascular plants, macroalgae, microalgae, genetically-modified organisms, and hybrids of exotics. Approved list is defined as exotic plants that can be possessed without a permit. Ineligible species list is defined as rejected and previously prohibited species which will be maintained by Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and not part of the rule.

### **How to Regulate the Use of Exotic/Genetically Modified Alga for Biofuels**

**Chilton** reported on microalgae and the escalating interest for its use in bio-fuels. **Chilton** stated that at a recent meeting he attended, the Admiral of the Navy said that by the year 2020, they want at least 8 million barrels of bio-fuel produced. **Chilton** reported that the Air Force and Army also want bio-fuel. However, there are many special concerns with microalgae, such as its toxicity to humans, animals and other plants; its propensity to bloom, and its competition with native species. There is also the requirement for separate treatment and the fact that there are thousands of species and strains, many of which are poorly described.



**Chilton** stated that there are no permits needed for possession and use for species that are known to be native, are naturalized (typically found in Texas waters), known to be a low risk to Texas waters, and are maintained by educational institutions, museums, etc. for education or small-scale, non-commercial research. **D. McLean** asked what types of situations are envisioned for handing out permits. **Chilton** explained that a permit will be required when identification is not provided below the genus level (organism will be assumed to be exotic); if the species is toxic or has the propensity for dangerous blooms; genetically modified organisms will be considered exotic species. Permits may be issued for research, aquaculture, vegetation management, wastewater treatment, or industrial/commercial purposes. The transition period is a three-month period after implementation. It allows possession of exotic species pending permit issuance. Currently, 10-year permits are offered, but fees are paid annually. There are also provisions for disposal of illegal species.

### **Discussion of Projects for Funding in 2011**

**R. Lukens** reported that \$50,000.00 was available as a one-time source for funding a project that the Panel would vote on. **Lukens** stated that there were 5 proposals received and each proposal author would give a quick overview of their project. The selection of the project chosen to receive the award would be voted on by a number system assigned to each project. The following projects were presented for selection. Project #1: "GSARP Invasive Species Traveling Trunk" **H. Kumpf**. Project #2: "Advancing Early Detection and Rapid Response in the Gulf and South Atlantic Region" **C. Jacoby**. Project #3: "Reproductive Sterility as Tool for Prevention and Control of Invasive Aquatics" **J. Teem**. Project #4: "Production of *Salvinia* Weevils for Biocontrol of *Salvinia Molesta* in Louisiana" **J. Teem**. Project #5: "Trojan Y Chromosome Eradication of Invasive Fish-Development of Sex-specific DNA Markers" **J. Teem**.

#### **Project #1: "GSARP Invasive Species Traveling Trunk"**

**H. Kumpf** stated that the project would develop and produce a "traveling trunk" of hands-on invasive species examples. The collection will consist of 14 different species. He informed the panel that the specimens would not be real; they will be replicates. Also included will be an annotated outline of talking points for presentation to secondary school students and laymen. The trunk can also be available for legislators to offer to government officials. The material will cover definitions, sources, ecological impacts, economic costs (when available), suggested public actions, and websites for additional information. The invasive flora and fauna material will contain bullets covering native origin, purpose of introduction (if intentional), route, and brief life history with ecological and economic impacts. A CD of the talking points and species will be included for visual presentation. The updated listing of invasive species under preparation will be included for reference. The "Traveling Trunk" will be produced in a mailable container. The GSARP office at the GSMFC will be requested to house the "Traveling Trunk" and a \$200 allowance is part of the budget to cover shipping costs. Return will be at the borrower's expense. Notice of availability is intended to be posted on the GSARP website. No viable materials/specimens will be in the final project. **Kumpf** explained that the invasive species "Traveling Trunk" will provide a number of essential purposes. It will not only serve as an academic educational tool (at least one state has made invasive species a unit in their standards) but will be effective when addressing conservation groups, administrators or legislators. This

self-contained program will stand alone or can be augmented with local examples. The "Traveling Trunk" would provide both tactile and visual input for maximum impact. Such a product will apply equally across the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.

**S. Hardin** stated that they do something similar and he was concerned that the trunk will "collect dust" after awhile because there really might not be anyone responsible for making sure it gets sent out and sent back. He also asked if one trunk was enough or if there are plans to create a second trunk. **Kumpf** explained that the original budget was for 3 trunks. **Lukens** stated that his concern was not just to make sure the trunk gets sent out, but to make sure it is also monitored and updated periodically. The panel needs to make sure that what they are offering the public is something that is current. There also needs to be a strategy developed for distribution of the trunk.

Project #2: "Advancing Early Detection and Rapid Response in the Gulf and South Atlantic Region":

**C. Jacoby** stated that the Panel is revising its rapid response plan. The plan contains an overview of existing sampling programs. **Jacoby** explained that the objectives of the project will be to assess the capacity of existing programs to facilitate rapid responses and recommend improvements, changes and new programs, to identify hotspots of risk or potential impact, to assess and improve sampling protocols and to use or develop an integrated network for detection, verification and reporting of invasions. The proposed project would further progress toward these objectives by developing and implementing a process for gathering, collating and displaying metadata for relevant sampling in a geographic information system (GIS). Initially, this project will capture metadata detailing who, what, when, where and how for sampling undertaken by panel members and affiliated groups. The current list varies in its level of detail, and it could be augmented by information regarding the capacity to document unusual species. The initial goal is to evaluate existing capacity to detect introductions and range expansions. The resulting framework could ultimately guide allocation of existing or new resources such as identifying priority sites and times by modeling risks associated with spatiotemporal gaps in monitoring. Targeted training could be designed to increase the capacity to identify unusual species. The project will help standardize metadata for monitoring programs; collate metadata to highlight unnecessary redundancy, key gaps, and valuable opportunities for coordinated, cooperative and collaborative efforts; make metadata accessible via database and maps. **Jacoby** explained that GIS has been used to document and assess the distribution of ocean monitoring equipment in the Southeast, and lessons learned by GIS can be drawn on. The project would yield similar results for existing sampling that might detect non-native species. Issues regarding response rate and objections to submitting metadata would be addressed by getting buy-in from the Panel so that the project was viewed as helpful rather than a nuisance or a threat. Dedicated staff would minimize redundant requests, ensure follow-up to obtain and clarify submissions, and continually improve the submission process. Allocating one year for the project would provide time for respondents to submit metadata and time for staff to wear down reluctant groups. Requests to standardize precision and accuracy would accompany requests for metadata, but logistics may dictate that this project highlights desirable improvements.

Project #3: "Reproductive Sterility as Tool for Prevention and Control of Invasive Aquatics"

**J. Teem** reported that non-indigenous Apple Snails present two problems in the GSARP region. First, the species, *P. insularum*, is widespread through the region and no method currently exists for eradication. Currently, standard methods for producing reproductively sterile snails by irradiation result in low yields of sterile snails. There is a need for methods to produce reproductively sterile Apple Snails in high yields. Second, aquarium dumping remains a potential route for new introductions of Apple Snails into watersheds in the region. If aquarium snails were made available as a sterile product, the risk of new snail introductions via aquarium release could greatly be reduced. **Teem** explained that there are two specific aims to the project. Specific Aim 1: will be to investigate two alternative approaches to irradiation for the purpose of generating sterile snails in high yields. Scope- Triploidy and chromosomal translocations in *P. insularum* will be investigated as new methods for producing sterile Apple Snails for sterile release. Standard methods for generating triploidy in aquatic organisms will be applied towards Apple Snails to generate polyploids. Flow cytometry will be used to assay changes in ploidy. Chromosomal translocations will be generated through gamma-irradiation of Apple Snail eggs. Translocations will be detected using genetic crosses to assay for loss of fertility in translocation heterozygotes. **Teem** reported that he will be the one conducting DNA analysis of ploidy and chromosomal variants at the FDACS laboratory in Tallahassee, Florida. Specific Aim 2: will be to produce reproductively sterile Apple Snails for two species in demand as ornamentals in the aquarium trade; *P. bridgesi* and *A. spixi*. Scope- Eggs of these species will be irradiated to determine a dose that confers adult sterility without compromising viability. Irradiation of eggs will occur at the FDACS facility in Gainesville, Florida. Mating tests will be conducted at Rawlins Tropical Fish Farm in Lithia, Florida.

**Teem** stated that the project's benefits to GSARP are numerous. The project will contribute to island Apple Snail eradication work that is currently in progress within the region and supported by USFWS. The practical utility of the approach for Apple Snail eradication will improve if sterile triploid snails can be produced for sterile release. The project will additionally investigate a new means of prevention that has great potential for reducing the risk of snail establishment following introductions through the aquarium trade. By producing a sterile snail product, the concept of sterile animals in the aquarium trade can be introduced as a regulatory concept to the USDA. One problem is that there is currently no demand for sterile Apple Snails. **D. McLean** asked if sterile Apple Snails are being developed for the aquarium trade and if the industry was interested in partnering with him to develop them. **Teem** replied that they were, and he has spoken to an Apple Snail producer in Florida who believes that it is an important item for the aquarium industry. **Teem** stated that the aquarium trade is well aware that they are partly responsible for the introduction of many non-native species into the environment and this would be their opportunity to help produce an environmentally safe species that would not become invasive in the future. **T. Jackson** pointed out that "novelty sells" and that perhaps snails can be produced with brightly colored shells to make them more attractive for consumer purchases.

Project #4: "Production of Salvinia Weevils for Biocontrol of *Salvinia Molesta* in Louisiana"

**J. Teem** reported that the use of Salvinia Weevils for biocontrol of *Salvinia molesta* is becoming an increasingly important aspect of *Salvinia molesta* management in Texas and Louisiana. Due

to unfavorably cold weather in Texas and Louisiana until June, local production of weevils is usually limited. Therefore, a need for weevil production during winter months in order to have sufficient numbers available in April and May is vital. This can be achieved by growing weevils in Florida where the climate is suitable for growth, and then transporting them to Louisiana in the spring when they are needed. **Teem** explained that *Salvinia Weevils (Cyrtobagous salviniae)* are highly specific bio-control insects introduced by the USDA into Texas and Louisiana for *Salvinia molesta* control. There are two varieties of the insect available; one that was obtained from Brazil and the other a variety that is established in Florida. Both varieties will attack *S. molesta* and have been used in bio-control efforts in Louisiana. **Teem** explained that the goal of this project will be to produce 10,000 *Salvinia Weevils* (Florida variety) at the University of Florida Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory for transportation to Louisiana in the spring of 2011. Florida weevils will be propagated on *S. minima* grown in burial vaults. Harvested weevils will be shipped by FedEx to Alexander Peret of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries for distribution to sites in Louisiana.

**Teem** explained that the project will provide many benefits to GSARP. *Salvinia weevil* bio-control for *Salvinia molesta* is a high priority for Texas and Louisiana, and may become a high priority for other GSARP states in the future. By providing weevils in the spring at a time when local production is limited, this project increases the likelihood that subsequent weevil bio-control efforts throughout the summer will succeed at target areas. If early application of weevils improves the efficacy of *S. molesta* bio-control as anticipated, the project will provide a means to supply weevils in the spring period for future years in accordance with market demand. **E. Chilton** stated that the smaller Florida weevils did not work on *Salvinia molesta* in Texas. Moreover, with the larger Brazilian weevils, they were able to gather 60-70,000 weevils at a time instead of 50-100 of the Florida weevils, and actually saw results.

#### Project #5: "Trojan Y Chromosome Eradication of Invasive Fish-Development of Sex-specific DNA Markers"

**J. Teem** reported that the methodology available for the eradication of invasive fish species is currently extremely limited. It has never been tested, except on his computer. Unfortunately, chemical treatment for the eradication of fish is limited to small water systems and has the undesirable effect of targeting native species in addition to the target species. Genetic approaches may offer an alternative which is both specific to the target species and not limited to small water bodies. In the proposed strategy, a "Trojan YY fish" consisting of sex-reversed fish containing two Y chromosomes are introduced into a normal fish population. These YY fish result in the production of a disproportionate number of male fish in the population in subsequent generations. Mathematical modeling of the system following introduction at a constant and small rate of the YY fish reveals that female fish decline in numbers over time, leading to eventual extinction.

**Teem** explained that several requirements must be met in order for the YY eradication strategy to be successful. First, the target fish must have an XY sex-determination system. It must also be possible to sex-reverse juveniles of the target species so that phenotypic females are produced which contain Y chromosomes instead of X chromosomes (Fyy). Further, the Fyy fish that are

produced must be viable and able to mate as normal (Fxx) females within a population. Lastly, the target fish must be amenable to production within an aquaculture context so that Trojan fish may be produced in sufficient quantities needed for consistent introduction to the target population over time. Nile Tilapia (*O. niloticus*) is an invasive fish that meets these criteria. They reproduce very quickly. Nile Tilapia has an XY sex-determination system and both male (Myy) and female (Fyy) YY fish have previously been made in this species using hormone induced sex-reversal combined with selective breeding. Since eradication through chemical treatment cannot be applied to large areas where Nile Tilapia have become established, a Trojan Y chromosome approach to eradication could offer an alternative genetic bio-control approach to eliminate them from these areas. **Teem** stated that in order to test the feasibility of a Trojan Y chromosome eradication strategy for Nile Tilapia, YY brood stock must first be developed. Correctly identifying the sex chromosome genotype of fish used in the breeding program is the primary difficulty in developing YY brood stock. If DNA probes specific to the *O. niloticus* sex chromosomes were available, sex-chromosome genotyping of fish could be greatly facilitated. The reason the experiment hasn't already been done on Tilapia is because the fish are not available due to the fact that they are owned by a company that produces the fish for food consumption.

**Teem** explained that the goal of this project will be to identify sex-specific DNA markers for Nile Tilapia. Randomly amplified polymorphic DNA (RAPD) fingerprinting techniques that have been successfully applied to other species will be applied to Nile Tilapia. Novel sex-specific PCR products will be identified that are specific to either male or female fish. Markers will then be tested on sex-reversed fish to determine their utility in YY brood stock development.

The benefit to the GSARP will be the genetic bio-control for eliminating invasive fish. The recent Genetic Bio-control Symposium held in Minneapolis, Minnesota last year identified field-testing of the Trojan Y Chromosome Strategy (TYC) as one of the highest priorities for future research in this area. However, field-testing cannot take place until YY brood stocks are developed and available. Sex-specific chromosome markers for Nile Tilapia identified in this project will significantly advance the status of the TYC method towards a field test on a fish species that is currently the subject of management efforts in the GSARP region.

**D. McLean** stated that he wanted to make it clear to the panel that the \$50,000.00 is not extra money. It is money that belongs to the panel that didn't get spent out of \$300,000.00 the Fish & Wildlife Service had available. The year **Lukens** left, all of the panel's money had not been spent, so the \$50,000.00 is the remainder of that money.

After tabulating the votes, **Ballard** announced that the top three choices were: First Place: Project #5: "Trojan Y Chromosome Eradication of Invasive Fish-Development of Sex-specific DNA Markers", which will receive \$18,000.00. Second Place: Project #3: "Reproductive Sterility as Tool for Prevention and Control of Invasive Aquatics", which will receive \$20,000.00. Third Place: Project #1: "GSARP Invasive Species Traveling Trunk", which will receive \$12,000.00.

### Discussion of Species of Concern Tables

**J. Teem** distributed copies of the Species of Concern Table which shows current and potential future management priorities in the Gulf and South Atlantic Region of aquatic invasive species and invasive aquatic/semi-aquatic plant species. **Teem** stated that he wants the panel to decide what species should be put on the list and how to go about deciding what species goes on the list, and what will be the criteria for adding and deleting species. **Teem** also wants the panel to decide who has the authority to make those decisions. He stated that there needs to be a representative from each state who is responsible for the content of their state's table. **Kumpf** suggested that one person from each state agency be designated to make those decisions. **Lukens** stated that the panel would select representatives for each of the 8 eight states. Those selected were: Steve Rider - Alabama, John Teem - Florida, Keith Weaver - Georgia, Rebecca Hillebrant - Louisiana, Dennis Riecke - Mississippi, Trish Murphey - North Carolina, Chris Page - South Carolina, and Earl Chilton - Texas.

**D. McLean** asked what exactly the purpose of the list was and what type of impact the panel wanted to make with it. **Teem** stated that there is a good use for the list, when NOAA has an invasive species grant competition, they ask the FL Dept. of Agriculture's Division of Aquaculture for their research priorities. The species that are listed on their table are the ones that, if a grant is being proposed and the species research priorities go in front of the grant reviewers, the reviewers give them extra consideration because it matches the panel list. **S. Hardin** suggested that the table needs to have categories to which the species of concern fit in - a category of Concern, a category of Management, and a category of Research Needs. **D. Riecke** stated that he thought the list should primarily be a list of general Species of Concern that in the future will be dealt with in some way. **C. Furqueron** agreed and stated that he sees it as a quick list for someone to look at as a reference, and it would also show a state's contact person. **D. Schmidt** stated that the purpose of the list should be defined first and who the target audience is. **R. Luken's** opinion was that the target audience is everybody. Several of the panel members objected to the word "management" being used, as the connotation is not clear. **Fuller** suggested that the wording be "List of Species of Concern to Management Agencies" and the Panel agreed.

**E. Chilton** brought up the concern that in Texas, they have run into the problem that some of their volunteers were prematurely publishing their species of concern, before the state's official list of species of concern had actually been released. There were potential political and legal ramifications because dealers were getting ready to take people to court because species were prematurely being placed on the list and it was causing dealers to lose business. **Chilton** cautioned the panel that if the species are not officially listed by the state, there is a concern that placing them on the panel's list could cause potential lawsuits. **Lukens** stated that a disclaimer should be displayed that states, "This list is not regulatory and does not represent species that exist on the state's prohibited list". He suggested listing the contact person's name for each state, along with a message stating, "For more information about the status of this species, contact X, Y, Z". **Riecke** stated that he feels the purpose of the list is to keep the public aware of invasive species that are of concern. While he understands what **Chilton** pointed out, the mission is to conserve, manage and protect natural resources; regardless of how the pet trade and plant growers think the published list will affect them.

### **Public Comment**

**R. Lukens** provided the opportunity for public comment. No comments were received.

**The meeting recessed at 5:20p.m.**

### **Thursday, October 28, 2010**

**The meeting reconvened at 8:30 a.m.** The Chairman again provided the opportunity for public comment. No comments were received.

### **Revised Rapid Response Plan Overview**

**L. Hartman** gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Rapid Response Plan for the Gulf and South Atlantic- aka: Invasives Know no Boundaries". **Hartman** reported on the activities that have been done by the rapid response group. In December of 2004, there was a synthesis of each state's invasive sampling, regulations and planning. In Fall of 2009, the group suggested an Incident Command System format. The objectives of the ICS are to have a "first on scene" structure, to have personnel from diverse agencies and backgrounds, and to reduce miscommunication and problems. In April of 2010, the Regional Rapid Response Plan was put into ICS format. In July of 2010, the workgroup met to write a definitive Rapid Response Plan. **Hartman** reported that when the group met in New Orleans, it was decided that 80% of the Florida Early Detection groups plan would be merged with the GSARP Regional Rapid Response Plan, to make an integrated whole. Any mention of "control" would be removed and an overview of "pathways" was to be added. **Hartman** also stated that ICS was pared down. **Hartman** also gave a presentation of the revision of the Early Detection Rapid Response Plan and the Panel all made suggestions for making further revisions. She stated that if the Panel has any objections to or changes for the Plan, to please let the group know within the next month and it can be discussed as a group. **R. Lukens** reminded the panel not just to read the documents themselves, but to share them amongst their agency's hierarchy so that they don't get pushed aside by the rather intricate and involved situation that has to do with invasive species.

### **Members Forum**

**Alabama** – **S. Rider** reported that, after numerous delays, the Alabama Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plan has been submitted to the National ANS Task Force for approval at the next meeting on November 3-4, 2010 and that they hope for approval or at least conditional approval. **Rider** also provided an update on island Apple Snails. He reported that for the past fiscal year 2010, consecutive applications across two days using copper sulfate were conducted in Langan Municipal Lake. Two applications of EPA-approved aquatic herbicides have been sprayed on emergent plants (e.g., giant cutgrass, cattails, water primrose, water hyacinth, etc.) across the entire lake margin (upper and lower pool) to eliminate egg laying habitat. The plan is to eliminate or reduce egg laying habitat and thus, reduce reproduction rates. Copper-based paint normally used for wooden boat hulls was applied to the concrete wall near a walkway at the "park" side of the lake. Snails have completely avoided laying eggs where the paint was applied, though due to the late summer drought and the subsequent lowered lake level, the snails have

now laid eggs below the paint line. Egg scraping was also done. **Rider** reported that they assisted the city of Mobile with keeping the Langan Lake Dam drain ports clean, as it allows more water to flow through the dam and draw the water away from many of the shallow wetted banks where emergent plant beds are thick. Limited trapping of snails has continued to be done to monitor abundance. On October 13, 2009, 32 snails were captured in 20 traps (1.6 snails/7-day trip). On October 13, 2010, 4 snails were trapped in 15 traps (0.27 snails/7-day trap). There were no snails found in 15 traps that were recently checked. On August 19, 2010, Island Apple Snails were discovered in a subdivision pond in Spanish Fort. No snails have been found below the pond dam. Approximately 250 adult snails have been trapped and a treatment plan is being developed. **Rider** also reported that Oriental Weatherfish have been collected nearly 10 miles south of the original collection site in Logan Martin Reservoir.

Florida – **D. Schmitz** reported that a new exotic aquatic plant species from South America, Red Root Floater (*Phyllanthus fluitans*), has recently been found in the Peace River. *Phyllanthus fluitans* is a small floating plant with very short internodes and a well-developed root system. The species is a popular aquarium plant and one of very few aquatic representatives of the large family of Euphorbiaceae, which mostly inhabit much different habitats like the succulent desert plants. According to aquarium literature, the plant prefers nutrient-rich, soft and slightly acidic water. Eradication efforts are underway. The Southwest Florida Water Management District, in cooperation with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, has treated some small, scattered populations of this plant on the Peace River in an attempt to contain or eliminate this infestation. The first treatment of a diquat-based herbicide was conducted on October 6, 2010. According to a New Zealand Risk Assessment published in 2000, Red River Floater has not been recorded to be a weed in other parts of the world. However, based on a limited survey of Mexican scientific reports published during the past 5 years, it does appear to be a weed in some Mexico locations. **Schmitz** stated that at this point, it is unknown if the species is a threat to the Gulf States. He will keep the panel informed of updates via emails.

**S. Hardin** provided the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) report. He reported on the 2008-2009 feeding trials of introduced Applesnails (*P. insularum* and *P. canaliculata*). The trial results revealed that the snails preferred submerged plant species over emergents. Cattails (*Typha sp.*) and Bulrush (*Scirpus californicus*) were not eaten by the snails. It is believed that *P. insularum* are more selective in their diets than *P. canaliculata*. Before consuming less palatable macrophyte, *P. insularum* revert to periphyton. As juveniles, *P. insularum* are capable of consuming up to 0.5 g hydrilla/g body weight in 24-hours time and 0.2 g/g body weight as adults. In 2008-2009, manual removal of *P. canaliculata* and egg clutches from a 5-acre retention pond was done. Weekly from May 29, 2008-June 23, 2009, a total of 49 retrieval trips occurred. The number of snails removed per visit declined from 2,948 to 58. The number of egg clutches removed declined from 1,737 to 54. The total number of live snails removed was 20,959 and the total number of egg clutches removed was 18,934. **Hardin** reported on a 2009-2010 study that is underway on the impacts of exotic Apple snails on native Apple snails. In Lake Okeechobee, 32-1m<sup>2</sup> enclosures containing *P. insularum*, *P. canaliculata*, *P. paludosa*, and native and exotic snails are monitored every 2 weeks for changes in vegetation and depth preferences. Efforts are underway to eradicate *P. canaliculata* via snail and egg mass removal. As of August 26, 2010, no snails were found and 4 egg masses were removed. Also,



early efforts with copper sulfate application were probably counter-productive and it is believed that it causes the snails to locate elsewhere and spread. **Hardin** provided a preliminary database table of non-native species records by major group as of June 30, 2010.

<u>Group:</u>	<u>Number:</u>
Marine Algae	2
Bivalves	8
Snails	16
Other Invertebrates	30
Fish	127
Amphibians	4
Reptiles	80
Birds	240
Mammals	36

**Hardin** reported that in October, 2009, they received an angler-caught Red-belly Piranha from a homeowner's pond in West Palm Beach. Another Piranha was collected from a renovated pond in November. A dead Piranha was brought to the laboratory in Palm Beach County in January, 2010. Three follow-up samplings turned up no additional Piranhas. A photograph was received of a Piranha that was collected from a homeowner's association pond in Lee County in April, 2010. Ponds sampled in April, May and June produced no additional Piranhas.

**Hardin** gave an update on the Non-Native Pet Amnesty Program. During 2009-2010, two amnesty events were sponsored by the FWC. They are producing a "playbook" so local communities can conduct their own events. The procedure for holding the event consists of advertising and promotion, logistical details, and turn-key data entry and management software to maintain an inventory of surrendered and adopted animals. A grant was received from the Everglades National Park to hold 5 amnesty events over the next 3 years. A mobile trailer will be obtained to carry supplies and hold surrendered pets. A hotline to find homes for unwanted pets will be created.

**Hardin** reported on Tilapia (*Oreochromis*) risk analysis for 2010-2011. A U.S FWS grant was received, with the Florida Department of Agriculture/Consumer Services and the University of Florida as partners. Two *Oreochromis* species, Blue Tilapia (*O. aureus*) and Mozambique Tilapia (*O. mossambicus*) and their hybrids are now established. Nile Tilapia (*O. niloticus*) are reproducing in several areas in Central and North Florida. Tilapia are regulated as "conditional species" with no personal possession allowed. They are in commercial culture with bio-security. The exception is the Blue Tilapia, which does not require a permit to possess. However, they cannot be stocked in public waters in the Florida Peninsula. There are requests for Tilapias for pond culture and stocking for algae control. A risk analysis is being done for relaxed stocking and aquaculture rules for the Tilapia species.

**Hardin** reported on the Marine Ornamental Outreach for 2010-2011. A U.S FWS grant was received, with the Florida Department of Agriculture/Consumer Services and the University of Florida as partners. A follow-up is being done on the previous marine ornamental pathway risk analysis. The primary risk is the release by consumers and unlicensed consumer-to-consumer sales. Ten public outreach and education activities were recommended to mitigate the risk of

release. A project is underway to form an advisory committee with members representing pet retailers, the U.S FWS, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, the Florida Aquarium, wholesalers, the Tampa Bay Aquarium Society and hobbyists. The recommendations from the advisory committee will be prioritized. Outreach activities to reinforce the “do not release” message will be implemented.

Georgia – **K. Weaver** provided the Panel with the following report on Georgia’s AIS activities.

The current results for the Satilla River Flathead Removal Project are as follows:

For the 2010 sampling season (May-October), 6,289 flathead catfish totaling 11,101 pounds were removed from the river. Since the implementation of the full-time flathead management program in 2007, more than 19,761 fish totaling 53,671 pounds have been removed. The size structure of the flathead population has been affected, with the weight of the average-size fish dropping from 5.8 pounds in 2007, to 2.9 pounds in 2008, to 1.4 pounds in 2009. In 2010, there was a slight weight increase to 1.8 pounds. Biomass per effort showed a similar trend and had also declined from 57.1 kg/hr in 2007, to 23.6 kg/hr in 2008, to 19.9 kg/hr in 2009. In 2010, there was an increase to 31.1 kg/hr.

Maintenance control of flathead catfish in the Satilla River may be possible, given the reported changes in the size structure and biomass of the population. However, intensive harvest needs to be maintained to prevent the flathead population from rebuilding, especially during high water years, where strong recruitment has been demonstrated by the introduced flathead population.

The Satilla River is the typical floodplain-driven ecosystem. Large amounts of beneficial nutrients enter the system during high water periods. Anecdotal fishing reports suggest that the Redbreast Sunfish has begun to make a comeback in the Satilla River, but there simply has not been enough time for the population to rebound. This spring and summer, favorable water conditions (high water) for the fish production have persisted on the river. Such conditions, combined with continued efforts to reduce the Flathead Catfish population, will hopefully result in the Redbreast Sunfish population rebounding to historical levels throughout the entire river.

**Weaver’s** report also gave an update on State Surveys. The DNR Commissioner has established an aquatic vegetation committee to survey all DNR properties to inventory aquatic vegetation. The committee will identify hotspots and most importantly possible threats to Georgia’s natural resources. The goal is to gather the information in a database in order to better manage aquatic vegetation on state property. This is the first committee established within Georgia DNR to identify these areas.

**Weaver’s** report gave an update on Applesnail projects. The first phase of the proposal from UGA to evaluate factors controlling the spread and distribution of Applesnails is underway. Recalling the significance of this project, the channeled Applesnail is currently classified as a Priority 1(a) Species in the 2009 Georgia Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plan (GANSMP). The proposed studies would assist agencies in Georgia with Objective 5, Action 3. Data concerning potential habitats would inform managers when planning surveys to investigate the occurrence of the species in Georgia. In addition, it will synthesize information on existing

locations and abiotic factors effecting growth, reproduction, survival and invasiveness. Ultimately, this vital information will be used to build a predictive model of the spread of the invasive Applesnail within Georgia. The study will also initiate baseline monitoring in existing invasive snail locations and adjacent control sites to begin investigating impacts of the snail on aquatic ecosystems. GADNR is assisting **Dr. Teem** at the Aquatic Center Pond located in St. Mary's, GA. The pond is located near the St. Mary's River and was chosen because of its smaller size, ease of management, and close proximity to the Okefenokee Refuge. The Aquatic Center Pond is largely isolated from other drainage ditches in the area and is connected only during times of high water. In the first year, bi-weekly photographic records of the survey sites at the Aquatic Center Pond and nearby control sites will be made to provide a baseline assessment of the fertile egg masses being produced. Baited traps will be used to measure snail density. At this time, no sterile snails will be released into the Aquatic Center Pond. Before releasing sterile snails, Georgia will require an evaluation of the efficacy of the sterile-release pilot study at the Orange Ave. pond in Florida. Also, snail eggs will be collected at the Aquatic Center Pond and transported to the USDA facility in Tifton for irradiation.

Louisiana – **R. Hillebrant** reported that a volunteer spraying program was started in Toledo Bend to combat Giant Salvinia. Willing participants attend a training seminar and obtain a permit in order to be allowed to spray. To date, 88 people have been trained and 23 permits have been issued. A second training seminar will take place on Saturday, October 24, 2010, with 80-90 participants expected to attend. A similar system is being worked on for Lake Bistineau since there is a large problem with Giant Salvinia there. New Salvinia Weevil ponds have been started, bringing the total number of ponds to 7. The ponds should be ready for harvest next year.

New catch methods for Asian Carp have been legalized. In addition to traditional catch methods, Silver Carp and Bighead Carp may also be captured by dip nets, spears, boats, and snagging. A contract was signed with Tips from the Pros (Chef Philippe Parola) for the promotion/marketing of Asian Carp as a new seafood option in the United States. In other news, a contract with the USGS National Wetlands Research Center for a Louisiana non-native aquatic species pathway analysis and an early detection field manual was completed.

Mississippi – **M. Brainard** reported that the FWS awarded a grant for the purchase of a remote controlled helicopter with an attached camera to use for early detection of Giant Salvinia. The helicopter will hopefully be acquired by the end of the year. **Brainard** also stated that 35-40 "Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers" signs had been put up at public boat launches and piers along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. There were also 500 "Report Invasive Lionfish" pamphlets printed that will be distributed to charter boat operators, dive shops and bait shops.

**D. Riecke** reported that the department has sent letters to the Corps of Engineer's districts asking them to address their national policy for invasive species in all Public Notice project plan documents. The reaction of the Corps has been mixed, with some districts stating that the policy need not be addressed at the Public Notice stage of the project review process, and some districts not responding at all. An electronic file of North Carolina's version of "Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers" brochure was sent to Rob Emens, NC Division of Water Resources. A presentation

on ANS issues was given to students at Camp Fish. A revision of MDWFP regulations (Public Notice 1405) was done to prohibit live forms of Snakeheads (all species in the family Channidae) and Swamp Eels (all species in the family Synbranchidae) from being transported into the state, offered for sale in the state, or possessed within the state. Stocking of any non-native fish, except Common Carp, Goldfish, Triploid Grass Carp and Rainbow Trout would be prohibited in private ponds, except for legally permitted aquaculture facilities. This revision was a result of the discovery of Tilapia in a private recreational fishing pond near the Big Black River. Since 1969, only live forms of Piranhas and Walking Catfish could not be transported, offered for sale and possessed in Mississippi. There were no restrictions on stocking non-native species in recreational fishing ponds.

**Riecke** reported that the State Management Plan for Aquatic Invasive Species has undergone state review and public comments were received. The Plan was sent to the National ANS Task Force in January, 2010 for review and extensive comments were received. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is the designated lead agency for plan development. The MDEQ was heavily involved in response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, which has prevented revision of the State Management Plan. The MDEQ plans to hire a contractor to revise the plan for final submission to the ANS Task Force in the spring of 2011.

Ongoing activities include:

- When boat registrations and renewal mail-outs are done, a “*Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers*” card is also included.
- The “*Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers*” logo and bullet list are published in the annual regulation guides of the *Mississippi Outdoor Digest* and the *Guide to Mississippi Saltwater Fishing*.
- Links to the MRBP, GSARP, Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers, and Habitattitude websites are on the department website.
- The Mississippi Museum of Natural Science has a permanent exhibit on exotic species.
- The MDMR has been monitoring and treating Giant Salvinia (*Salvinia Molesta*) in the Pascagoula River system.

Future activities include:

- Implementing the activities specified in the Mississippi State Management Plan for Aquatic Invasive Species.
- Composing freshwater fishing bait regulations to specify what bait can be legally sold, possessed, transported and used in Mississippi.
- Adopting a list of approved, restricted and prohibited species as specified in MS Code 49-7-80. Amending the list of approved, restricted and prohibited species as specified in the public notice that regulates aquaculture activities in Mississippi.
- Pursuing the licensing of retail bait outlets that sell live freshwater fishing baits.
- Establishing an EDRR monitoring program comprised of state and federal personnel who sample aquatic species in Mississippi public waterways on a routine basis.
- The MDMR has secured Mississippi Coastal Impact Assistance Program funding authority to hire a Conservation Resource Biologist under a 4 year contract to form an Aquatic Nuisance Species Advisory Council and begin implementation of action items contained in the Mississippi State Management Plan for Aquatic Invasive Species.

South Carolina - **D. Knott** gave a PowerPoint presentation on South Carolina's update. On September 16, 2010, a Lionfish was captured 90 km off Charleston in routine deployment of chevron fish traps by the MARMAP Program. In June, 2010, another infestation of an undetermined magnitude of Island Applesnails (IAS) was reported in a subdivision pond near Charleston. A DNR inspection yielded 5 large empty shells and 2 egg clusters. Due to apparent objections from the property manager, treatment was not done. In Socastee (Horry County), attempted control of IAS has been both successful and a disappointment. The number of original infested ponds that have had control work performed has been reduced. Some are showing complete eradication, while others have shown a significant reduction in the numbers of snail reproduction. Two new reports have been received in the vicinity.

**Knott** gave an update on Asian Tiger Shrimp. In 2009, 45 *Penaeus monodon* were reported in 7 coastal states – 16 from NC; 13 from SC; 3 from GA; 1 from FL; 5 from AL; 3 from MS; 4 from LA. In 2010, 10 *Penaeus monodon* were reported – 0 from NC; 4 from SC; 0 from GA; 1 from FL (110-120mm collected 12km south of New Smyrna Beach by a private citizen and given to the FL FWC); 0 from AL; 0 from MS; 5 from LA. Possible sources of the shrimp influx include US escapement, Caribbean aquaculture operations (Dominican Republic, L. Maracaibo and the Venezuelan coast), established breeding populations along the US coast, established wild Caribbean populations, and continuous ballast transport and delivery. **D. Schmitz** asked if the shrimp were being cultured in the United States. **Knott** replied that, to his knowledge, they were not. **M. Brainard** asked if the shrimp are in aquariums. **Knott** replied that he has not heard of them being sold for aquariums. In a report issued by Jason Clay and Aaron McNevin of the World Wildlife Fund, little is known about the overall impact of the introduction of shrimp species from aquaculture. *P. monodon* from Asia have been transported throughout Asia and brought to Latin America. *P. monodon* from Africa have been taken to Asia and the Pacific, and there has been a flow of this same species from Southeast Asia to South Asia and vice versa. The introduction of shrimp from different regions, even of the same species, introduces new DNA and characteristics that have not evolved *in situ*. These interactions are probably insignificant within ponds, but when shrimp escape during water exchange or harvest, they could cause genetic pollution that could alter the inbred characteristics, and perhaps the viability, of wild populations. The introduction of disease pathogens from other areas is equally important. Diseases previously found only in Taiwan and China have now spread throughout Asia and even into Latin America, where they have caused billions of dollars in damage each year. The impact of disease pathogens on wild stocks is not documented, but anecdotal information suggests that it may be serious. In 1992-1993 when diseases reduced shrimp aquaculture in China by 60-70%, the production of wild-caught shrimp in that country also declined by 90%. It is not clear whether the disease was transmitted from the wild to the ponds or vice versa, but there does seem to be some direct relationship. Pathogens can be introduced through the transportation of infected larvae or brood-stock that are released without proper quarantine and handling. In addition, diseases have been found to be viable in processed frozen product that is shipped to another region for further processing.

Control work for Hydrilla utilizing Triploid Grass Carp has been successful on Lake Greenwood, with no herbicide work scheduled for this year. The Santee Cooper Lakes show an increase in

native plants this year following a conservative approach to maintenance stocking of Triploid Grass Carp.

**Knott** reported that they have received their share of the monies from the approved AIS plan and also additional monies from USFWS. The intent is to utilize those funds to implement public education/outreach activities, as well as, reconvene the SC AIS Task Force to updating the plan.

The SC DNR is working with the Santee Cooper staff and the Clemson DPR to add *Nymphoides cristata* to the "SC Noxious Weeds" list. It is hoped that regulations and education will limit the spread from the Santee Cooper Lakes into other South Carolina lakes.

South Carolina's Early Detection/Rapid Response plan will be modeled after the regional plan that is being developed by GSARP.

**C. Page** reported that they had used a very low rate of .4 pounds per million of Natrix in eradication efforts of Applesnails. On the first day after treatment, there were floaters in the water. The following day, a few dead snails were found. Another treatment was done, and on the fourth day, an extreme number of dead snails were found, along with some small fish. The application was changed to one single treatment of .4ppm. On the third day, results were seen. Natrix is also used in the control of Zebra Mussels. **Page** stated that they have also stocked some retention ponds with Shellcrackers, which seem to be helping eradicate small snail offspring.

**Page** reported on Hydrilla efforts in SC. They have used Grass Carp in Lake Murray, the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest lake in the state, and it has proved to be highly successful. Since a survey was done in 2003, there has been no re-growth of Hydrilla. Lake Greenwood was also stocked with Grass Carp and after the second year, no Hydrilla has been found.

Texas – **L. Hartman** reported that they have not received any reports of Lionfish. **E. Chilton** reported that the first documented case of Zebra Mussels was in 2006 on a boat from Minnesota at Lake Texoma. Four additional boats from out of state have been intercepted and sanitized. In April 2009, the first live specimen was found in actual Texas waters. The range of the Zebra Mussels continued to increase. In July, Zebra Mussels were found near the North Texas Municipal Water District (NTMWD) intake structure on Lake Tecoma. In August, three specimens were found downstream of the NTMWD outfall area on West Prong Sister Grove Creek. Subsequent surveys in 2009 found no additional mussels. Surveys done in 2010 have found additional mussels in Sister Grove Creek. The range of the mussels in the Trinity River Basin in Eastern Texas near Houston could be immense. **Chilton** reported that the TPWD's response will include developing a Prevention and Response Plan; treating Sister Grove Creek with KCI or chelated copper; monitoring Lake Texoma, Lake Lavon, Lake Ray Hubbard, Lake Granbury, Lake Whitney, and Lake Waco; have staff watch for Zebra Mussels during their visits to area bodies of water; inter-basin water transfers.

**D. Schmitz** made a motion that a newsletter be created by the panel members with summaries about what each state is doing and the research that is being done. **Schmitz**

volunteered to be the Editor and will do most of the work. He stated that a committee needs to be formed with 3 other people to review the newsletter because it has to be reviewed and cleared to ensure that there is nothing in it that would be controversial or does not meet the panel's goals. He wants to identify researchers who are conducting research in the various states. The newsletter would be put out on an annual basis and would be distributed through PDF to all members of the panel, who would then further distribute it in their own states. **Schmitz** explained as not to burden the members with additional work, he would gather the information for the newsletter from information that has already been presented or has been included in the information packets from previous meetings. If he has any concerns or questions, he would call the panel member. **Schmitz** stated that he would like to have a 2011 edition. **Lukens** suggested that federal agencies also be allowed to contribute summaries of what they have been doing. **Lukens asked if there were any objections to Schmitz's proposal. There being no objections, the motion was approved.**

### **Work Group Updates**

**Early Detection/Rapid Response – L. Hartman** reported that Texas is doing "TexRAT" in Galveston from June 19-24, 2011, to "test" the Texas Rapid Assessment Team. Out-of-state individuals and agencies are welcome, and she will be sending out letters with information to those interested in attending.

**Education/Outreach – C. Jacoby** did not have any further updates. **Kumpf** reported that the Boy Scout organization was a way to get the message out about Invasive Species and that 2 merit badges could possibly include invasive species - the Environment Sciences Merit Badge and the Nature Merit Badge. This could be an area to pursue. **Jacoby** stated that there was some work in the past by the task force to try and create an Invasive Species Merit Badge and suggested contacting Susan Mangin for more information.

**Information/Management – R. Lukens** explained that the standard job for the work group is to manage the content of the web page. **J. Ballard** reported that the GSARP website needs to be updated. Along with the content of the website, the new website was put up and all of the old species fact sheets were still on it. Updating those fact sheets would be difficult and time-consuming. However, **P. Fuller** suggested that she could provide filtered use of their website. They have worked with agencies in other regions of the country and have customized the look that each agency wanted. It then appears on that agency's website with their banner around it. It only shows that region of the country and only queries the appropriate records. **Fuller** stated that if the panel wants to do something similar, she could set it up for GSARP. **Ballard** pointed out that the development and a programmer will cost money. **D. McLean** inquired about the cost. **Fuller** explained that she could do an inexpensive version for approximately \$10,000.00. **Lukens** stated that it was a good solution and although the panel does not have the funds at this time, he asked if there were any objections to conceptually moving the issue forward. There were no objections from the panel members. **Lukens made a motion that the panel would like to have the NAS Program create a database for the GSARP panel website. C. Jacoby seconded and the motion was approved.**

### Nominations for Potential Member for Open Seat – Selection of New Member

**R. Lukens** stated that he wants to deal with the problem of panel members who do not show up for meetings. He asked that **J. Ballard** contact those people and ask about their intent to continue on the panel. **Lukens** stated that the open seat was D. Yeager's seat, who was the representative from the National Estuary Program. **Lukens** wants to extend an invitation for panel membership to another representative from the National Estuary Program. **L. Hartman** suggested asking someone from the Galveston Bay Estuary Program because they are highly involved in invasive species. She offered to call and see if someone would be interested in joining the panel. **D. Knott** offered to call someone from the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). **E. Chilton** suggested adding a representative from the aquarium or nursery industry that has a real interest in invasive species. **Lukens** stated that he wants a representative from the commercial/industrial category, but feels the panel needs to take into consideration how large it wants to be. He further stated that extending membership in existing categories and adding categories is a discussion that should be postponed until a later time. He stated that there were 2 suggestions on the table. **Hartman** suggested contacting someone from the Galveston Bay Estuary Program and **Knott** suggested contacting someone from NERR. **Lukens** asked if there were any objections. There were no objections. He instructed **Hartman** and **Knott** to emphasize to the people contacted that they would have a commitment and not to view their panel membership as just a pastime. They will have to come to panel meetings twice a year. **Hartman** and **Knott** will report their findings to **Ballard**.

**H. Kumpf** suggested that Linda Walters be appointed to the vacant panel seat. Her resume was in each member's folder. **Lukens** stated that the problem was that she has no affiliation with the programs and that she is not a pick for the panel. **Lukens** felt that she would be more appropriate as an At-Large member. There is no limit for the number of At-Large members on the panel. **Kumpf made a motion to consider Linda Walters as an At-Large member. The motion was not seconded. Ballard made a motion to table the issue. Hartman seconded and the motion to table was approved.** **Lukens** stated that the panel will keep the resume of Ms. Walters on file for future consideration. In other news, **Lukens** reported that **M. O'Leary** is withdrawing from the panel. **J. Herrod** offered to step in for Region 4 and SAARP. **Lukens** also reported that **D. Knott** is retiring from the panel and will be considered for an At-Large membership. **Lukens made a motion to elect David Knott as an At-Large member of the panel. P. Fuller seconded and the motion was approved.**

**Lukens** brought up the issue of non-active members. **Lukens** asked **Ballard** to contact **L. Akins**, **M. O'Connell**, **G. Ramseur** and **R. Menendez** and ask them about their intention for their seats and their availability for future panel meetings.

### Election of Officer

**Vice Chairman – R. Lukens** reported that he had contacted **J. Morris** via email and suggested that he be replaced as Vice Chairman, because he is not able to attend meetings due to the lack of travel funds. The panel would then accept nominations for a new Vice Chairman, which is a 2-year term. **Lukens** explained that the Vice Chairman doesn't really have any specific duties, other than to act in the absence of the Chairman and to be involved with the steering committees.



**Lukens** pointed out that whoever gets elected would normally move into the Chairman's seat when the Chairman's term expires. He then opened the floor for nominations. **D. Schmitz** nominated **L. Hartman** for Vice Chairman. **D. Riecke** seconded the motion. **D. Knott** nominated **P. Fuller**, who declined the nomination. With no other nominations, **L. Hartman** was elected as Vice Chairman, effective immediately.

#### Other Business

**D. Schmitz** spoke on The North American Invasive Species Network, which put together a consortium of regional invasive species centers and institutes and met last March in West Palm Beach, Florida. An overall strategic plan was hammered out with benchmarks to achieve in putting together a network. There has been a lot of interest in the endeavor and they now have the backing of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, which helps implement the North American Agreement for Environmental Cooperation between the United States, Canada and Mexico. The Commission granted travel funds in the amount of \$260,000.00. The next workshop is scheduled for mid-November in Boise, Idaho. Along with informative discussions, there will be elections and training sessions held. Information about the workshop will be sent to **J. Ballard**. **Lukens** asked **Schmitz** how they envisioned working in cooperation with the regional panels. **Schmitz** explained that, along with having established by-laws, they are also going to have a Board of Directors. The network will be comprised of the regional hub, as they are the ones who are actually providing services and already have an infrastructure in place. There will also be advisory boards for the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The United States advisory board will be comprised of general agencies, the invasive species council, and regional panel representatives. The advisory board will seat 25 members. Two additional advisory boards that will be created are a technical advisory board and an industry representative advisory board. **Lukens** asked **Schmitz** to keep the panel posted as the mission moves forward. **Schmitz** informed the panel that there will be another workshop held next spring or summer in Mexico or Canada.

#### Next Meeting

Charleston, SC was selected as the primary meeting location, with Mobile, AL as the secondary location. The week of April 4<sup>th</sup> or the week of April 11<sup>th</sup> was selected as the time frame.

#### Public Comment

**Lukens** provided the opportunity for public comment. There was none.

**Lukens** made a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Hartman** seconded and the motion was approved. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

APPROVED BY:  
Ralph E Hode  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**OIL DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAM (EDRP)  
MINUTES of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Meeting  
November 17-18, 2010  
New Orleans, Louisiana**

The Oil Disaster Recovery Program Ad Hoc Committee convened a two day meeting coordinated by the GSMFC under NA10NMF4770481 for the purpose of discussing proposed marketing opportunities and for approving actions necessary for the program to move forward. GSMFC Executive Director, **Larry Simpson**, facilitated the meeting, introduced attendees and speakers and provided an organizational overview of the ODRP Ad Hoc committee and related sub committees. The following state representatives, staff and other attendees were present.

**Ad Hoc Committee representation**

Virginia Vail, FWC, *GSMFC Commissioner*, Tallahassee, FL  
Dale Diaz, *GSMFC Commissioner*, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Mike Ray, *GSMFC Commissioner*, TPWD, Austin, TX  
Chris Blankenship, ADCNR, Gulf Shores, AL  
Mark Schexnayder, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Laura Deslatte, LDWF, New Orleans, LA  
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS

**GSMFC Staff**

Alex Miller, Economist, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ralph Hode, *EDRP Coordinator*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Larry Simpson, *Executive Director*, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Ben Posadas, MS Extension Service, Biloxi, MS  
Rich Knipe, Market Maker, University of Illinois  
Darlene Knipe, Market Maker, University of Illinois  
Richard Warna, Market Maker, University of Illinois  
Geoff Bolan, MSC  
Jay Lugar, MSC  
Bob Trumble, MRAG  
Harlan Pierce, Louisiana Fish Company, Kenner, LA

**Objective**

The objective of the meeting was to familiarize the Ad Hoc Committee with the Marine Stewardship Council certification program, and the University of Illinois' web based marketing program; to review and approve a number of action items necessary to support planned marketing activities involving, testing, stock assessment and direct marketing; and to

appoint/approve professional marketing membership from each state in the establishment of a Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition.

### **Reports/Presentations**

#### **Web Based Marketing:**

A presentation was made by Darlene Knipe of the University of Illinois on the Market Maker program which was developed at the university level for the purpose of providing a low cost marketing mechanism for agricultural producers in the mid-west. The purpose of the presentation was to show how web-based agricultural product marketing has expanded across the US over the past five years and how applications developed for agricultural purposes could be adapted to support web-based marketing for seafood producers, processors and wholesalers. Rich Knipe and Richard Warna, both of the University of Illinois, were also present to address questions regarding the program.

#### **Gulf Product Sustainability and Quality Assurance Certification:**

A presentation was also made by Jay Lugar on the Marine Stewardship Council's marine fisheries sustainability program. Issues discussed included increased/expanded market potentials for MSC certified products, the process and measurable standards by which certifications of Gulf seafood products could be obtained, and MSC certification programs that are either ongoing or planned in the Gulf fisheries. Geoff Bolan, also of MSC was on hand to assist in answering questions and further explain species selection processes, standards and criteria by which ongoing fishery management programs are measured to determine if a fishery can become certified, and the need for third party contracts to conduct assessment and develop traceability measures for Gulf seafood. Bob Trumble of MRAG, a global consulting organization dedicated to the support of sustainable fisheries and marine resources, was also on hand to discuss third party involvement in assessment of fishery stocks that may qualify for MSC certifications.

### **Ad Hoc Committee Actions**

#### **Direct Marketing Actions:**

Authorized staff to provide up to \$25 K in support of a culinary event planned in the Quebec or Toronto area of Canada in an effort to showcase Gulf of Mexico seafood products in the Canadian markets. A meeting is scheduled with the Louisiana Seafood Marketing Board in New Orleans on December 8, 2010 to hear final plans and to discuss potential GSMFC participation.

Authorized staff to provide up to \$75 K each year for not more than 3 years in support of an organized GOM oyster processors, dealers, and restaurant association meeting designed to showcase oyster products from the Gulf. The meetings are held annually in the Washington DC area and are designed to bring processors, dealers and restaurants from across the country together to address marketing opportunities, production trends, health and safety issues, and other matters or trends as may be necessary to further the demand for Gulf oysters.

Authorized staff to provide up to \$175 K in 2012 and 2013 in support of an ongoing Great American Cook off in which chefs from across the country are brought together in New Orleans, Louisiana for a GOM seafood cooking competition. The purpose of the event is to obtain National recognition for the winning chef and restaurant and the promotion of Gulf seafood as a main menu item in restaurants across the US. The event has been an ongoing one for several years and has been previously supported by NOAA Fisheries grants. However, with increased costs of conducting the event and limited NOAA funding, combined with the recent negative perceptions brought on by the DWH Oil Disaster, the Louisiana Seafood Marketing and Promotion Board has requested additional assistance through the Direct Marketing component of the ODRP program.

Authorized staff to support Texas and Alabama in the establishment of web-based marketing programs aimed at linking processors, dealers and associated seafood marketers in each state with buyers from across the country. Tentative plans call for both states to meet with their respective marketing groups (either in agricultural or tourism sectors) to develop statements of work and budgets. Proposals are to address, but are not limited to, concepts or options similar to those presented by the Market Maker group from the University of Illinois. The remaining states are to examine ongoing web-based marketing programs in their respective states and to examine opportunities within the Direct Marketing component of this program that could support existing direct marketing or web-based marketing programs. Each state agreed to examine any such program that was operational in their respective state and to be prepared to report on them at the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee.

On other direct marketing actions, the Ad Hoc Committee committed to support the formation of a Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition (GSMC) that would work to develop programs and strategies aimed at increased recognition and use of fresh gulf products on a continuing and long term basis; and, to work with national alliances in promotion of US products. Initial funding to support the Coalition is to come from the ODRP grant and is expected to be made available over a five year period. Appointments to the GSMC were as follows:

Louisiana	Ewell Smith - Executive Director, LASPMB Rene LeBreton (alternate) Asst. Dir. LASPMB
Mississippi	Irving Jackson – Director, MDMR Marketing Bureau
Florida	Joanne Mcneely- Bureau Chief, BSAM, FDACS
Texas	Alyssa Herold – State Coordinator for Shrimp Marketing, TDA
Alabama	Lee Sentell – Director, Alabama Tourism Board.

The Ad Hoc Committee also began the compilation of a list of non-voting marine fisheries stakeholders from throughout the Gulf to act in an advisory capacity to the Coalition.

### **Quality Assurance Actions:**

Authorized staff to develop agreements with individual states or related agencies for the acquisition of testing equipment necessary to expand seafood testing capabilities and to conduct testing as necessary to continue to assure the quality of products harvested from the Gulf. All five states expressed interest in acquiring fluorescence or related equipment to test for PAH and/or dispersants and in expanding testing programs for seafood harvested from their respective jurisdictions. Most states also reported on requests for post oil disaster testing proposals that had been submitted to British Petroleum (BP) for funding; and reported that ultimate use of ODRP funds for testing purposes would depend on BPs response to pending state proposals. No action was taken regarding actual funding levels but the states agreed to have reports on both BP reimbursement possibilities and testing needs at the next meeting.

### **Stock/Sustainability Certifications Actions:**

Authorized staff to support a request from the Mississippi DMR in an amount not to exceed \$350 K to expand its trip ticket program to include shrimp, crabs and an undeveloped portion of the finfish landings reporting program. Currently, the state has a program for oysters, live bait, and a portion of its finfish landings. A fully functional trip ticket program is necessary if sustainability certifications are to be achieved.

Authorized staff to begin the process of contracting for a Rapid Assessment of multiple species preparatory to further considerations of MSC and FOA-based certifications of Gulf fisheries. The scope of work for a rapid assessment would include (1) a report on the status of ongoing fishery certifications activity at either the state level or through NGOs across the Gulf; and (2) a review of harvest and management actions in place for approximately 25 gulf commercial species that would possibly benefit from quality and sustainability certifications. These included but are not limited to the following:

Red Snapper	Grouper	Tilefish
Vermillion Snapper	Porgy	Long line EM ???
King Mackerel	Blue Crab	Oyster
Menhaden	Gulf shrimp	Mullet
Amberjack	Wahoo	Yellowfin Tuna
Spiny Lobster	Flounder	Sheepshead
Black Drum	Red Drum	Spotted Seatrout
Shark		

Tentative plans under this action called for the identification of those species most likely to achieve certifications and then to consider authorization for pre-assessment, final assessments and ultimately final certifications. Staff was requested to obtain proposals from a number of qualified consulting firms for the conduct of the rapid assessments. Those states which already had certification programs in place for select species and a history of fishery assessments agreed to submit a list of firms that they had considered or which were under contract for use in developing a request for proposals. Staff was also tasked to include a traceability component in its request for proposals. Traceability could be addressed as a separate proposal or may be

included as a separate element in the rapid assessment proposal where consultants were capable to conduct both components.

**Stock Assessment Enhancement actions:**

Authorized staff to move forward with support for a Gulf menhaden port sampling component. Funding sources are yet to be defined but could be supported through either the ODRP marketing component or the stock assessment enhancement component and is estimated at \$62 K per year.

**Other**

**Gulf Oil Spill Document Depository**

It was determined that because of the abundance of studies, reports, findings, and other assorted documents pertaining to the Gulf Oil Disaster, there was a need for a central depository of such documents in order to maintain historical records of the disaster in a single accessible location. Larry Simpson indicated that GSMFC, already being the central depository for numerous marine fisheries documents, would consider establishing the depository if the states and related agencies were willing to submit pertinent documents for depository purposes.

There being no further business, the committee concurred in setting the next meeting for January 24, 25, & 26, 2011, in New Orleans, times and place to be determined. The meeting would include both the Ad Hoc Committee as well as the GSMC and would be designed to recognize the Marketing Coalition, to brief them on planned activities, and to assure them of the overall support of the states in the development of further marketing strategies and organization of the Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition. Louisiana was requested to arrange for a marketing presentation from Delcambre Direct Marketing. The states were also requested to make reports as follows:

- A report on the Chefs Study by the Louisiana Seafood Promotion Board
- Reports from individual states regarding pending or approved proposals before BP
- A report on the Mississippi Trip Ticket program and plans to expand

# **DRAFT**

## **SEAMAP - GULF, SOUTH ATLANTIC AND CARIBBEAN SUBCOMMITTEES JOINT MINUTES**

St. Croix, USVI  
August 10, 2010

**Chairman Read Hendon** called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. The following members and others were present:

### **Members:**

Read Hendon, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
John Mareska ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Fernando Martinez, TPWD, Corpus Christi, TX  
Bob McMichael, FWC/FWRI, St. Petersburg, FL  
Roger Pugliese, SAFMC, Charleston, SC  
Aida Rosario, PRDNER, Mayaguez, PR  
Jed Brown, FWS, USVI  
Katy West, NCDMF, Washington, NC  
Cara Hoar, proxy for Myron Fischer, Baton Rouge, LA  
Rick Leard, GMFMC, Tampa, FL  
Patrick Geer, GACRD, Brunswick, GA  
Marcel Reichert, SCDMR, Columbia, SC

### **Others:**

Larry DeLancey, SCDNR, Charleston, SC  
Jessica Stephen, SCDNR, Charleston, SC  
Ellie F. Roche, NOAA/NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL  
Kelly Donnelly, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Jeanne Boylan, SCDNR, Charleston, SC  
Beulah Dalmida, FWS, USVI  
William Coles, DPNR, St. Thomas, USVI

### **Staff:**

Jeff Rester, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Terry Henwood, NOAA/NMFS, Pascagoula, MS  
Melissa Paine, ASMFC, Washington, DC  
Edgardo Ojeda, UPR Sea Grant, Mayaguez, PR  
Cheryl Noble, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

### **Adoption of Agenda**

A lionfish presentation by Mr. William Coles was added under Other Business. The agenda was adopted with this addition.

# **DRAFT**

## **Approval of Minutes**

The August 4, 2009 Joint Annual SEAMAP Meeting Minutes were approved as submitted.

## **Overview of SEAMAP-Caribbean**

A. Rosario gave the following SEAMAP-Caribbean report.

### **Virgin Islands**

#### **Conch Assessment Survey**

The Division of Fish and Wildlife, DPNR completed all underwater conch surveys for the U.S. Virgin Islands. Approximately twenty trips for the territory were completed from November 2008 to October 2010. A total of 22 original survey sites and 2 new survey sites were completed on St. Thomas/St. John from 2008 to 2009. On St. Croix a total of 24 original sites and 8 new sites were completed from 2009 to 2010. Around the island of St. Thomas, 133 adult conch and 140 juvenile conch were observed on scooter transects for a total of 253 queen conch. St. John had 60 adult and 59 juvenile conchs for an observed total of 119 queen conch. St. Croix had a greater abundance of conch with 290 adults and 351 juveniles for a total of 641 queen conch observed on transects. Mean densities for adult and juvenile conch on St. Thomas were 36.68 conch/ha and 45.08 conch/ha, respectively. St. John conch densities were 18.34 adult/ha and 18.03 juvenile/ha. St. Croix observed densities were 26.51 adult/ha and 32.09 juvenile/ha.

#### **Juvenile Lobster Survey**

A study was completed to monitor the annual recruitment of juvenile lobsters in coastal mangrove environments to artificial habitats. Coastal Zone Management permits were obtained 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 and the Government of the Virgin Islands.

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 Ecological Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary (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 November 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 90 juvenile lobsters were recorded in Salt River habitats during the study period. The number of lobsters ranged from 0-15 per survey with a maximum of 10 per habitat. The mean size of juvenile lobsters in the habitats was 28.3 mm (SD = 10.01 mm). Lobster size ranged from 10-60 mm. Two possible peaks in lobster abundance were noted, April-May



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and August-November. Larger lobsters were found in August and smaller lobster from September-November. Recruitment appears to be spatially related to the artificial habitat location within the study area. More lobsters were found in habitats in the interior of the bay closer to the mangroves than in the outer embayment near the fringing reef. No lobster recruitment was recorded in Cas Cay Marine Reserve habitats.

A total of 1,873 fish representing 18 families and 42 species were recorded at the Salt River habitats. In order of priority, the most abundant fish families were *Labridae* (wrasse – slippery dick), *Acanthuridae* (surgeonfish – doctorfish), *Pomadasyidae* (grunts – French grunt), and *Scaridae* (parrotfish – bucktooth parrotfish). A total of 734 fish representing 17 families and 38 species were recorded at the Cas Cay habitats. In order of priority, the most abundant fish families were *Labridae* (wrasse – slippery dick), *Pomacentridae* (damsel fish – beau gregory and bicolor damselfish), *Acanthuridae* (surgeonfish – doctorfish and blue tang) and *Canthigasteridae* (sharpnose puffers).

### **Parrotfish Survey**

A study was initiated in May 2009 to determine the reproductive cycle of stoplight (*Sparisoma viride*), redbtail (*Sparisoma chrysopterygum*) and redbin (*Sparisoma rubripinne*) parrotfish. Samples of 25 fish of each of the three species are obtained monthly for biostatistical measurements, sex and gonad condition. The stages of gonad maturation, as recorded by visual observation of the gonads, were recorded as: Unknown (Stage 1), resting (Stage 2), developing (Stage 3), ripe (Stage 4) or spent (Stage 5) based on visual inspection. A total of eight samples have been obtained on St. Croix resulting in 200 stoplight and redbtail parrotfish and 150 redbin parrotfish. A total of 16 samples have been obtained in St. Thomas resulting in 136 stoplight, 27 redbin, and 105 redbtail parrotfish. The study is ongoing and will continue until September 2010.

### **Administrative/Staff Issues**

There have been two new additions to the administrative staff of DFW. Ms. Beulah Dalmida-Smith was appointed as Director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife. Ms. Dalmida-Smith started on August 3 and is located in St. Thomas. Dr. Jonathan Jed Brown was appointed as Assistant Director and Chief of Fisheries. He started on December 4 and is located in St. Croix. Vacant fisheries positions (two in St. Croix and one in St. Thomas) continue to hamper the ability of the Division to complete projects in a timely manner. A. Rosario said this is her last meeting as the SEAMAP-C Chair. Dr. Brown will now be the SEAMAP-C Chair.

### **Training**

Two staff, one from St. Thomas and one from St. Croix attended a week long training program in San Diego at the headquarters of Seabotix, Inc. The purpose of the training was to learn to operate and maintain a small ROV. A Seabotix ROV had been purchased for the Caribbean SEAMAP program, and the training will allow staff to deploy the ROV in the USVI to conduct underwater surveys.

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## **Puerto Rico**

### **Reef Fish Survey – 2010-11**

All contracts to hire the proposed personnel were submitted, approved and are in the process of being amended while work continues on the east and west coasts. Most of the purchasing of project materials is finished and all materials have been received. The study objective is to expand the reef fish sampling to the east and south coasts of Puerto Rico.

The Reef Fish Survey was conducted on the west coast in 30 quadrants chosen randomly; each quadrant was sampled twice for a total of 60 trips. Data (stations, depth, weather conditions, etc.) of each trip was recorded. From March 2009 to July 2009, a total of 730 finfish weighing over 240 kg from 27 species and 17 families were collected. Each fish was measured, weighted and visually sexed. The gonads were photographed and removed and preserved for histological analysis. The process of fixing and cutting the sampled gonads has been delayed due to lack of personnel. A student from the Catholic University is helping with processing a number of gonads as part of a special project.

The database program to be used in the management and analysis of data was received from the SEAMAP data manager. Quality control during the data entering process reveals several glitches with the program that need to be worked out. The errors are being corrected that were found in the database.

East coast sampling started in October 2009. A total of 80 fishing trips will be made, 60 on the east and the other 20 on the south coast. A total of 49 trips were made by June 30, 2010, yielding a total of over 70 kg of finfish from 16 species and 8 families. Over 90% of the data was entered into the database, and the quality control process revealed serious errors in the data. For reasons unknown, measurements and the date format was changed by the data entry person, creating confusion in the data that was already keypunched. After a meeting with the biologists in charge, it was decided that it was easier to uniformly keypunch the whole data set again. Notwithstanding, the species composition collected at both ends of the island are similar, and the species dominating the catch were the same, red hinds and coney.

### **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 in the spawning aggregation monitoring. The late arrival of the cameras has delayed the start of the survey until December 2010.

### **Yellowtail Snapper Survey Objective**

The survey was planned to start last August on the west coast of Puerto Rico. Although the contracts with the fishers were in place, they needed to be amended. That process was finished and the amendment was signed one day before those contracts were to expire on March 31, 2010. All the funding for this survey was received in 2009. The sampling finally

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started in May 2010 on the west coast. A total of 13 trips out of 60 have been made. After some sampling adjustment, meaningful data for this species is being collected. Sampling includes fishing at traditional commercial yellowtail fishing grounds, and at other places identified by fishers as not good yellowtail fishing sites. They plan to fish during the four seasons of the year to determine seasonal variations. Therefore, the yellowtail snapper sampling should be finished by the end of April next year.

### **Lane Snapper Survey Objective**

The objective of this survey is to collect data on the lane snapper fisheries needed for a meaningful assessment of their population. The funding to undertake this survey was approved in two installments that have been received by July 2010. A fisher survey will be conducted among identified fishers that target this species to collect information on traditional fishing grounds. With this information, the stations to be sampled will be selected. Sampling is planned to start by September 2010 on the west coast of Puerto Rico.

### **SEAMAP-C UPR/Administrative Report**

#### **Administrative Coordination**

A total of three SEAMAP-C meetings were conducted between August 2009 and July 2010. The meetings took place alternately on 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. A one week ROV workshop training took place in the SEABOTIX facilities in San Diego, California. Five SEAMAP-C members participated in the ROV training course. In May, the Caribbean Chair and coordinator traveled to Pascagoula, MS, to attend a chairs and coordinators workshop. The meeting was primarily called to start the development of the 2011-2015 SEAMAP Management Plan.

#### **Outreach Material Production and Dissemination**

Two SEAMAP-C posters were 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 Caribbean program in each region. 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.

Two graduate students received student assistantships to continue updating the sampling protocols, and to summarize the information from all projects conducted by the Caribbean program. The main goal is to have a clear and uniform sampling protocol, and have the information accessible for dissemination, in addition to making the protocol available for outreach. The educational material was made available to fishermen during workshops and to targeted groups during routine coastal and shore visits.

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## **Acquisition of Reef Fish/EFH Sampling Gear**

A SEABOTIX-Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV), which was acquired with last year's supplemental funds, received an important upgrade during the contracted SEABOTIX training. A tracking and grabber system, an internal LED light for a second color camera and a scaling laser, were some of the new tools added to improve the capabilities of the ROV. SEAMAP-C will expand their surveys during 2010-2011 to verify, describe and characterize spatially localized spawning aggregation sites previously identified during an extensive interview-based survey. Potential spawning sites around the Puerto Rico Archipelago were identified, including the islands of Mona, Desecheo, Culebra and Vieques. Initial studies have been concentrated on the east coast of Puerto Rico to verify past known spawning aggregation sites and 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.

## **Overview of SEAMAP-South Atlantic**

R. Pugliese gave the following SEAMAP-South Atlantic report.

### **Work Group Reports**

#### **Coastal Survey**

In 2009, 336 stations were sampled, which was an increase of 10 stations per season, and this was continued for 2010. 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. Their priority species include horseshoe crab, sharks, blue crab, shrimp and weakfish. They continued age (otoliths), growth and stomach processing. A total of 131 species or genera were identified in spring 2010 trawls. Spot was the most abundant species, constituting 20% of total abundance, followed by Atlantic croaker (15%) and Atlantic bumper (10%).

#### **Bottom-Mapping, Fish Habitat Characterization and Assessment Adult Red Drum Longline Surveys**

There have been discussions between the state surveys to standardize survey methods, mainly ensuring that CPUE will be calculated in a standard way, and that space between hooks is standard.

South Carolina: Data from past 3 years of random sampling have been analyzed and sampling will start soon for 2010.

North Carolina: Random grid selected in each region during each of three 4-week periods (mid-July to October). The NC red drum longline survey is conducted at night using 100

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hooks per set. The NC inshore gillnet captures juveniles, so this survey is a good complement for the adult population. The species composition is dominated by red drum, and there are a significant number of rays caught too.

Georgia: The survey is conducted in southern GA and northern FL. They use a half mile of nautical line with 60 hooks per set. They do not catch a lot in April, May, and June, and most of the catch is in late fall in offshore reefs. They are trying to coordinate with NC to do some night sampling.

### **MARMAP Cooperative Survey**

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. SEAMAP support has enabled an expansion to more sampling sites. In spite of an extended yard period, which made the R/V Palmetto unavailable for April, they have had a very successful season so far: Completed 5 Legs, including three 9 day trips (NC and 2x FL), leg 6 is underway (Aug. 3-13). Completed 34.5 sea days, 14 of which under SEAMAP. They sampled over 80 reconnaissance chevron traps with still cameras. Short bottom longlines were deployed at more than 30 stations. More than 60 hook and line collections were made to verify reef habitat and collect samples for stomach contents for red porgy and gray triggerfish and several other species. Noteworthy was a great white shark that was captured on one of the trap cameras. 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). They have had a record collection already in 2010, with the most gag ever collected.

### **Data Management**

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. All the data is currently in a Microsoft Access database, and the data will eventually be web accessible for SEDAR and other partners, and interacting with the IMS database. 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 developed a Data Management Guidance Plan. The main part they have been working on since November is on web connectivity. They are planning for an enterprise system which means that many users can access it and not all from the same location. SCDNR IT will assist and host the database, possibly in Oracle, and help develop the web connection.

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## **Crustacean**

The workgroup recently met in conjunction with the Coastal Survey workgroup, which meets every couple of years. All states attended and provided updates at this meeting. The blue crab populations are still depressed in many areas. The shrimp fishery is still declining, although it is more efficient. They saw an impact from the winter cold in 2010.

## Survey Reports

### **Pamlico Sound**

The primary target species are spot, croaker, bluefish, summer flounder, and shrimp species. In June, all species had fewer catches compared to the previous five years. In September, they caught 91 species of finfish, with spot and croaker being the most abundant. Spot and croaker increased compared to last year. They are seeing more weakfish in this survey and in their gillnet survey. Blue crab has been down, but this June they saw a lot.

### **Southeast Regional Taxonomic Center (SERTC)**

SEAMAP funds helped support the high quality taxonomic identification done at this Center, maintaining and expanding a curated collection of the coastal and marine fauna of the South Atlantic. SERTC is starting to catalog fish from SEAMAP and MARMAP. They are concentrating their work on stomach content analysis. 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. The expansion of SERTC capabilities and connecting with the diet lab of SEAMAP/MARMAP will be investigated.

R. Pugliese also stressed the need for a dedicated vessel in the South Atlantic, as the vessels being used for several of the South Atlantic studies (Coastal, MARMAP, and Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise) are nearing the end of their lives or are not secured.

## **Overview of NMFS**

T. Henwood reported all SEAMAP surveys have been completed or will be and that NMFS has been focusing most of their efforts on sampling for the DWH disaster.

## **Overview of SEAMAP - Gulf of Mexico**

R. Hendon gave the following SEAMAP-Gulf of Mexico report.

The Fall Plankton cruise took place from August 25 to September 30, 2009. One hundred thirty-five 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.

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The Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey was conducted in October and November, 2009, from off Tampa, Florida to the U.S.-Mexican border. Five hundred forty-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 entire U.S. 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.

The Winter Shrimp/Groundfish Survey took place in January and February 2010. One hundred nineteen 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 April 16-19, 2010 collecting data at 33 stations.

The SEAMAP Spring Plankton Survey took place in April 2010. Gulf waters were sampled from the west Florida shelf to the Louisiana/Texas border. 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 with Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas participating. This near shore survey complements 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.

A new vertical longline survey is currently being conducted off Alabama. A total of 12 grids are fished per survey. Two structure and two non-structure areas are randomly chosen and equally allocated across three depth strata. Vertical longline reels are randomly baited with either Atlantic mackerel or squid. Soak time is 5 minutes. Fish may be retained and processed for age and fecundity. All fish are sacrificed for otoliths at stations deeper than 60 m. In water depth less than 60 m, stations may be assigned as tag and release or collection sites. Two hundred thirteen sets were completed in April, May, and June of this year.

The SEAMAP Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey was conducted in June and July of this year. Effort was reduced this year due to monitoring impacts of the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster.

### **Proposed Activities and Budget Needs for FY2011**

All components agreed to continue their current programs with existing allocations. **B. McMichael moved to allocate any increases or decreases at the current percentages. R. Pugliese seconded the motion and it passed. T. Henwood** asked if states could purchase

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vessels if they have the funding and if so suggested the states start buying vessels for the SEAMAP program. **R. Pugliese moved to check into this, B. McMichael seconded and the motion passed.**

The budget breakdown at the current level of funding is as follows:

Component	Percentage	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011
Gulf	40.6%	\$2,068,331	\$2,068,331	\$2,068,331
Caribbean	10.3%	\$525,847	\$525,847	\$525,847
South Atlantic	32.4%	\$1,647,653	\$1,647,653	\$1,647,653
NMFS	16.7%	\$848,234	\$848,234	\$848,234
	100.0%	\$5,090,065	\$5,090,065	\$5,090,065

### **SEAMAP Strategic Planning**

**J. Rester** updated the Subcommittee on the SEAMAP strategic planning. He said the chairs and coordinators had a meeting in Pascagoula with Lisa Desfosse this past May to discuss what is envisioned for SEAMAP in the future. He said it has been recognized that more fishery independent sampling is needed and funds should be allocated to support the sampling. The goal is to make sure SEAMAP is the organization that receives the funds to do this fishery independent sampling.

### **Framework for Developing the 2011-2015 Management Plan**

**M. Paine** reviewed the guidelines for developing the new management plan. The coordinators and chairs met and agreed this will be helpful in revising the plan. She said they will need specific recommendations from work groups and the coordinators, and the chairs will meet again to agree or disagree on any new content or formatting changes. She plans to finalize the plan in February 2011 and the coordinators from each group will keep their Subcommittees informed.

### **Planning for the 2011 Joint Annual Meeting**

The Gulf will host the next Joint Annual Meeting and it was agreed to hold the meeting during the second week of August. Key West was suggested as the meeting site if government rates are available. J. Rester will research meeting costs and inform the other coordinators if it can be held in Key West.

### **Other Business**

**E. Roche** informed the Committee that the federal register notice for competitive funds have been published.

Mr. William Coles, from the USVI Division of Planning and Natural Resources gave a presentation on the Status of the Indo-Pacific Lionfish invasion in the USVI. He reviewed



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some lionfish quick facts that were lionfish are occurring in higher densities and are larger than in their native range. Lionfish grow up to 20cm/yr and can reach maturity in less than one year. Lionfish are carnivorous predators that eat many species of native fish and crustaceans, eat native prey faster than they can recover, can eat prey almost their own body size, and eat commercially and ecologically valuable species. Lionfish have year-round reproduction with females laying up to 30,000 eggs every 4 days. Lionfish have venomous spines and no natural predators in the Atlantic.

Mr. Coles showed a graph of the size of each lionfish caught on St. Croix. The fish continue to get bigger and they have not caught many small ones. They hope to catch all the fish for the time being. He said 124 lionfish have been caught in the USVI. He explained how the lionfish came into the area stating the most likely pathway is via home aquariums where owners illegally dumped them into Atlantic waters. The lionfish were first sighted off South Florida in the early 1990s. From south Florida, lionfish have been dispersed by the current; the Gulfstream current has carried lionfish eggs and larvae up the eastern seaboard and south in the tropical Atlantic and Caribbean. In 2000, lionfish began showing up along the US east coast and in Bermuda. Juveniles have been sighted as far north as Massachusetts but do not survive the cold winters there. In 2004, the first lionfish were reported in the Bahamas and since 2007 they have spread rapidly through the northern and western Caribbean.

He said that in some areas of the Bahamas and North Carolina, lionfish are becoming the most abundant fish on the reefs. They are found from the shoreline to depths of over 600 feet and in all habitat types including reefs, hardbottom, seagrass, mangroves, canals and wrecks. The goal of the Lionfish Management Plan is to prevent lionfish from negatively impacting local fisheries and marine ecosystems, and endangering public safety. The objectives are to achieve a sustained reduction of the lionfish throughout the USVI by opportunistic and targeted detection and removal of lionfish; education, outreach and training; and reporting and data analysis. He said that without positive action toward lionfish eradication they would lose fisheries, tourism, the culture and identity of the USVI. He stated the lionfish problem is bigger than most people realize and action needs to be taken now. The complete presentation can be obtained from the GSMFC office.

**There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m.**

**STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES – 61st Annual Fall Meeting  
Wednesday, October 20, 2010  
Clearwater Beach, FL**

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  
Virginia Vail, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL  
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Roy Crabtree, NMFS, St. Petersburg, FL  
Chris Blankenship, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Larry Simpson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve Turner (proxy for B. Ponwith), NMFS/SEFSC, Miami, FL

**Others**

Spencer Collier, GSMFC Commissioner, Irvington, AL  
Mark Berrigan, FDALS, Tallahassee, FL  
Tony Reisinger, Texas Sea Grant, San Benito, TX  
Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Bon Secour, AL  
Ellie Roche, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL  
Chuck Adams, FL Sea Grant Extension/ University of Florida, Gainesville, FL  
Judy Jamison, GSAFDF, Tampa, FL  
Mark Schexnayder, LDWF, New Orleans, LA  
W. Borden Wallace, Daybrook Fisheries, Inc., Empire, LA  
Chris Denson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Walter Keithly, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA  
Campo "Camp" Elias Matens, Baton Rouge, LA  
Rene LeBreton, Louisiana Seafood Marketing Board, New Orleans, LA  
Andy Furner, Trace Register, Seattle, WA  
Dag Heggelund, Trace Register, Seattle, WA  
Michael Bailey, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Liz Scott-Denton, NOAA Fisheries, Galveston, TX  
Joseph Smith, NMFS, Beaufort, NC  
Steve Myers, NOAA Fisheries Service, Silver Spring, MD  
Frank Helies, GSAFFI, Tampa, FL  
Gwen Hughes, GSAFFI, Tampa, FL

### Staff

David Donaldson, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, RecFIN(SE) Programmer/Analyst, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Janet Lumpkin, FIN Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Joe Ferrer, Systems Administrator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
James Ballard, Sportfish Restoration/Aquatic Invasives Coordinator, GSMFC  
Alex Miller, Economist, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ralph Hode, EDRP Program Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, IJF Program Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Jeff Rester, SEAMAP/Habitat Coordinator, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS  
Debbie McIntyre, IJF Staff Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

### Adoption of Agenda

**The agenda was adopted as presented.**

### Approval of Minutes

**The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, March 10, 2010 in Gulf Shores, Alabama were approved as written.**

### Menhaden Advisory Committee Report

**B. Wallace** stated that the committee met with a full agenda. At the meeting, **J. Smith** reported on the 2010 Gulf Menhaden season to date. The closure of most of the federal and state waters throughout the summer reduced the effort and landings during the prime fishing time. **Smith** indicated that the 2010 landings were down 33% from 2009 and 30% for the five-year average. The catches in July and August were off by 30-40% and forced the fleet into the western Louisiana and Texas waters for much of the summer. **Smith** estimates that since October has been strong, he projects around 350,000 MT to be landed by November 1st.

**L. Simpson** presented the overview of the ODRP program. 2011 menhaden port sampling will be included in the SAE (Stock Assessment Enhancement.) The MAC identified the need for a steady, long term source of funding for fishery-independent monitoring of juvenile menhaden for recruitment estimates in the stock assessment. A sampling protocol was developed to sample for juvenile menhaden in the coastal river systems but there is no funding to initiate the survey.

An update was given on the Atlantic menhaden. Landings along the east coast in 2010 have increased over 2009 by 30% and 23% for the five-year average. **Smith** anticipates the Atlantic landings to be 175,000 MT.

**S. VanderKooy** presented an overview of the SEDAR program and the Gulf Menhaden Stock Assessment Plan for 2011. The 2011 Gulf Menhaden SEDAR and FMP Revision will include GSMFC scheduling and funding the data and assessment workshops in March and July of 2011 as part of the SEDAR. The data workshop will take place during the Commission's

spring meeting along with an assessment symposium. **VanderKooy** and **Smith** will be revising the Gulf Menhaden FMP concurrent with the SEDAR.

**The MAC offered a motion which was accepted by the SFFMC. *Recognizing the need for better recruitment data for juvenile menhaden and recognizing funding is available for enhancement of fishery independent data collection from the Deep Water Horizon disaster, the MAC moves that appropriate funding be made available to develop and establish a fishery-independent survey for juvenile menhaden in the Gulf of Mexico. The motion passed unanimously.***

Finally, the chairmanship moved to the states and Texas was nominated and accepted. **J. Mambretti** or the appropriate representative would take the gavel at the March 2011 meeting.

### **Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel**

The panel met Monday with no action items. Several presentations were made to the panel related to NOAA activities and initiatives in the Gulf and staff provided some programmatic updates as well. The panels were also provided an overview of ODRP and SAE. There was considerable discussion regarding public perception and how best to identify regional approaches that would benefit both commercial and recreational interests. The panels were encouraged to pursue any ideas related to 'marketing' need that they had with the Commission and if needs weren't being met, to bring them to our attention. The current chairs **Horn** and **Angelo** remain.

### **FIN Data Program Report**

**Donaldson** covered the FIN activities in the 2011 cooperative agreement including; coordination and administration of FIN, collecting, managing and disseminating marine recreational fisheries data, head boat port sampling, FIN data management system, biological sampling, improving recreational fishing license/registry databases. The total budget is \$5.96 M. Trip tickets and Gulf Menhaden Port Sampling will be funded through the Stock Assessment Enhancement cooperative agreement with the total amount of \$1.14M. The Statement of Work and budget were submitted in September 2010 and are currently awaiting NMFS action with hopes to have subawards to states by early 2011.

### **Oil Disaster Response Program**

**M. Ray** commented on his appreciation for the Commission's weekly calls, the states' help, NOAA's involvement, and strategy for keeping everyone informed. **R. Crabtree** agreed with **Ray** and took an opportunity to thank GSMFC for the help throughout the ordeal. **J. Shepard** agreed that the strategy worked out well with coordination and cooperation with GSMFC.

### **Louisiana Fisheries Enhancement Initiatives**

**R. Lebreton** provided an overview of the Louisiana marketing program specifically addressing 'Wild Louisiana Shrimp'. The overall concept will be applied to other fisheries as pre-assessment certifications are complete. The idea is to expand niche markets for premium quality seafood. Not all wild caught will qualify but it will be an option available to fishermen, processors, and dealers should they choose to use it.

### **Seafood Traceability**

**A. Furner** with Trace Register presented their marketing service which is being explored by the LDWF to assist in the sustainable fisheries certification process. The web-based system allows consumers to identify where their seafood purchases originate and allow the dealers and processors to identify the final disposition of their products, opening new markets for advertising or development.

### **Status of IJF Fishery Management Plans and other IJF Activities**

**VanderKooy** discussed the current FMP workload and the need for the SFFMC to identify the next species or FMP revision by next March. At the current funding levels, IJF is able to do two plans simultaneously but will need to do more than two in the near future to keep up. The committee agreed that with the certification efforts currently being worked on, the revisions may be more important than a new profile. **VanderKooy** was directed to request reviews from the Stock Assessment Team prior to the March 2011 meeting.

### **Election of Chair/Facilitator**

**Donaldson** remains facilitator and **Diaz** was voted to be the new Chair for 2011.

*There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM*

APPROVED BY:  
  
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING  
MINUTES – 61st Annual Meeting  
Wednesday, October 20, 2010  
Clearwater Beach, Florida**

**Chairman V. Vail** called the meeting to order at 1:05 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 Blankenship, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Vernon Minton*)  
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Inc., Bon Secour, AL  
Spencer Collier, Alabama Legislature, Irvington, AL  
Virginia Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)  
Stephen Greep, Ft. Lauderdale, FL  
Thad Altman, Florida Legislature, Melbourne, FL  
Camp Matens, Baton Rouge, LA  
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge (*Proxy for Randy Pausina*)  
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Carter Smith*)  
Dale Diaz, MDMR, 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, Chief Financial Officer, Ocean Springs, MS  
James Ballard, SFP/ANS Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Roy Crabtree, NOAA/NMFS/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL  
Chuck Adams, Florida Sea Grant, Gainesville, FL  
Judy Jamison, Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Tampa, FL  
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL

Chris Denson, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Steve Meyers, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD  
Michael Bailey, NOAA Fisheries, SERO, St. Petersburg, FL  
Elizabeth Scott Denton, NOAA Fisheries, Miami, FL  
Mark Schexnayder, LDWF, New Orleans, LA

### **Adoption of Agenda**

**The agenda was adopted as presented without objection.**

### **Approval of Minutes**

**Minutes were adopted as presented without objection.**

### **GSMFC Standing Committee Reports**

Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) – **C. Blankenship** reported that the LEC met in July 2010 and worked on the *Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Operations Plan – 2011-2012*. He presented the final plan to the Commissioners for approval. **C. Blankenship moved to approve the 2011-2012 Operations Plan. M. Ray seconded. The Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Operations Plan – 2011-2012 was approved.**

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) Report – **J. Shepard** reported that the TCC met on Tuesday, October 19, 2010. They received reports from all of the Gulf States and NOAA Fisheries. The following subcommittees reported to the TCC: Crab, SEAMAP, Habitat, Data Management, Artificial Reef, and Fisheries Outreach. He briefed the Commissioners on their activities.

One of the main topics of discussion was Resource Monitoring Plans as a result of the Deepwater Horizon Oil spill. Louisiana has received approximately \$13 million for research over the next three years. They will be doing inshore, nearshore and offshore monitoring. Mississippi and Alabama are working together on a joint program to coordinate monitoring activities. They have not received funding from BP at this time. Florida and Texas are using their existing programs to address needs and to determine funding requirements.

No action items were presented from this meeting.

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). The MAC reported that 2010 landings were down 33 % from 2009, and 30% from the five year average. Catches in July and August were off by 30% to 40% and forced the fleet into the Western Louisiana and Texas waters for most of the summer. Since October things have improved and they expect the landings to reflect increases.

The S-FFMC also received a report on the Oil Disaster Response Program (ODRP). It was noted that the 2011 Menhaden Port Sampling Project would be included as part of the Stock Assessment

Enhancement Program (SAE). It was reported that the Commission will be scheduling and funding a menhaden data and assessment workshop in March and July 2011 as part of the Southeastern Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR).

**V. Vail reported that the S-FFMC recognizes the need for better recruitment data for juvenile menhaden. Funding is available for enhancement of fishery independent data collection from the Deep Water Horizon disaster. On behalf of the MAC, the S-FFMC requested that the Commission use the appropriate funding to develop and establish a fishery-independent survey for juvenile menhaden in the Gulf of Mexico. J. Gill moved to approve the S-FFMC request. Without objection the motion was approved.**

The S-FFMC received reports from the Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel (C/RFAP), an update on the FIN Data Program, ODRP, and IJF Program. **R. Lebreton** reported on Louisiana's Fisheries Enhancement Initiative and **A. Furner** from Trace Register, a marketing company that traces seafood products from the point of harvest to the point of purchase by a consumer, reported on their company's web based services.

**J. Gill moved to accept the S-FFMC report. Without objection the motion was approved.**

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

**C. Adams** reported that the SG-FEAP met on Tuesday, October 19, 2010. The SG-FEAP mission is to bring new Sea Grant facilities that have a fisheries orientation into the Panel and get them up to speed on issues that they will be confronted with, but primarily it is for the Panel to recognize topics of mutual interest with the Commission and to share capacity and expertise in a meaningful way.

The major theme for this meeting was "Disaster Response". They discussed how each State responded to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill disaster. The Sea Grant Agents and Specialist tried to focus on assisting and helping implement the various volunteer programs that came on line. This included beach clean-ups, vessels of opportunity programs, etc. They assisted as needed. They also tried to provide assistance in the claim process. Additionally they worked together on a single website to keep each agency informed of what was going on in the other States.

Also discussed was the status of the Seafood Processor and Dealer Survey. They received a presentation from **A. Miller**, on the Commission's use of ODRP funds. He reviewed the four basic components of the program; Advertising/Outreach, Sustainability/Quality Certification, Market Maker, and Seafood Safety/Testing Equipment.

The group also discussed the latest round of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program. The key to this program is development of education modules. Sea Grant has taken the lead in developing modules dealing with fuel efficiency, onboard handling of shrimp, and innovative marketing techniques.

**J. Gill moved to accept the report. Without objection the motion was approved.**



## **NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office**

**R. Crabtree** reported on the activities of the SERO. He discussed Deepwater Horizon/BP Oil Spill Fishery Closure Rulemaking and Framework Procedures. NOAA has adjusted the closure boundaries multiple times in response to new information. The resulting closure at its maximum was 88,522 square miles (or 37 % of the GOM). To date, NOAA has re-opened over 52,000 square miles of oil-impacted federal waters in accordance with the Re-opening Protocol. To re-open an oil-impacted area, the Re-opening Protocol requires NOAA to demonstrate that the area is oil free, that the area has little risk of being re-exposed to oil, and that tissue samples collected from within the area have passed both sensory and chemical analysis for hydrocarbons. NOAA also continues to sample and test fish from areas they re-open to fishing, as well as fish harvested by commercial fishermen Gulf-wide, to ensure seafood safety and improve consumer confidence in GOM seafood.

He reported on Council activity that is to reduce the take of sea turtles by the bottom longline component of the reef fish fishery. Actions include a seasonal area closure for bottom longlines used to fish for reef fish in the eastern GOM, an endorsement restriction allowing continued use of bottom longlines to fish for reef fish in the eastern GOM by only those 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 by a longline-endorsed vessel.

Other Council related action included a recent assessment update that indicates gag is undergoing overfishing and that stock size of red grouper has declined compared to the last assessment. The assessment update indicated 65-70 percent reductions are needed in total allowable catch (TAC) for gag, and 25 percent reduction in TAC is need for red grouper. NOAA published two proposed rule on Monday, October 20 for gag and red grouper. The comment period will run through November 2. At the Council's request NOAA published an interim rule that would release 1000,000 lbs of the gag quota for the commercial sector, and temporarily prohibit recreational harvest until Amendment 32 is finalized.

The recreational season for red snapper opened June 1, 2010. NOAA projected that the 3,403 – mp recreational quota would be met on July 23, and recreational harvest was prohibited at 12:01 am July 24, 2010. It became apparent that the quota had not been caught due to the closed areas. The Council subsequently requested NOAA to re-open recreational red snapper season for eight consecutive weekends.

**D. Diaz** stated that he wanted to publicly thank NOAA staff for their efforts during the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill disaster. Their efforts were appreciated and timely. **V. Vail** agreed and further stated that the communication amongst the States and NOAA were outstanding. **R. Crabtree** stated that all efforts during this disaster were a team effort and he thanked the States and the Commission for their part.

## **NOAA Fisheries Budget Updated**

**L. Simpson** discussed the history and purpose of the Saltonstall-Kennedy Account (S-K). The S-K account is a congressionally established fund that receives money from a duty placed on

imported fish products. He presented a chart the reviewed the financial history of the S-K account. He pointed out that the Department of Agriculture receives the duties collected and transfers it to NOAA. He discussed that in 1987 through 1991, funds were used for fisheries marketing. In 2003 and 2004 Congress directed funds to fishery projects. He pointed out that in 1978, 100% of the duties collected went to fisheries. Through the years the amount has decreased and in 2004 only 22% were used for fisheries projects. He provided this discussion for informational purposes.

He presented the President's Request for the 2011 NOAA Budget. There is no approved budget and he does not anticipate a budget until after the fall recess and the November elections. He highlighted areas of interest for the Commissioners.

The federal government is currently operating under a Continuing Resolution. **R. Crabtree** anticipates operating under a Continuing Resolution until after the November elections.

### **Status of State Budgets**

Florida – **V. Vail** provided the Commissioners with three charts that detailed overall Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) 5 Year Funding Trends, a comparison of Commercial Saltwater License Sales, and Recreational License Sales for current year and 2005/2006 (5 years ago). The FWC is funded by legislative appropriations from General Revenue and approximately 13 different trust funds.

The General Revenue appropriation has been reduced by about 53% over the past five years. Many activities and positions funded by the General Revenue have transferred to different trust funds. Some vacant positions have been eliminated but so far no staff has been laid off.

Appropriations from trust funds increased by approximately one third over the past five years, in part because General Revenue costs were shifted to trust funds and a new trust fund program was transferred to the FWC from another agency.

Each year Divisions have been asked to identify budget cuts of 5-10% for Commissioners to consider when finalizing the Legislative Budget Request. The Governor and Legislature have even more options when developing a balanced state budget based on anticipated revenues and all financial needs. If there is a revenue shortfall the agency budgets are reduced accordingly.

The Division of Marine Fisheries Management shows the same trend of decreasing General Revenue (down 100% from 5 years ago) and increasing trust fund appropriations. The Division's funding comes from three trust funds. Over the past 5 years the Division has shifted several positions to Sport Fish Restoration grant funding, reduced travel, reduced the number of on-site public workshops and advisory board meetings held to obtain public input on management issues, and videoconferences meetings when possible to reduce trust fund expenditures. Future budget reductions in the Division could result in loss of match to federal grant dollars, a reduction or elimination of printed information sought by anglers (especially fishing regulations), decreased trap retrieval effort, and maybe the loss of staff positions, depending on directions received.

The Fish & Wildlife Research Institute and the Division of Law Enforcement also show decreasing General Revenue (down 80% and 43%, respectively) and increasing trust fund (up to 20% and 86%, respectively) appropriations. The Institute shifted General Revenue positions and activities to grants or the Marine Resource Conservation Trust Fund. Many law enforcement positions were shifted out of the General Revenue into the Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund.

Alabama – **C. Blankenship** reported that the ADCNR does not use any general revenue funds. They are funded through license sales, gasoline tax and federal grants. Going into the budget cycle, the Education Trust Fund is showing a \$700 million shortfall and the General Funds are \$300 million short. There is a potential for a \$1 billion shortfall State wide.

License sales have increased 5% to 7% for recreational licenses over the last 5 to 7 years with the exception of this year. Due to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the loss of tourism recreational license sales are down 27%. Until tourism increases he sees license sales continuing to drop.

ADCNR was asked to cut their budget by 10% last year and they anticipate another 10% reduction this year. Several staff positions have been lost through attrition (retirement, etc). These positions will not be filled. The reduction and funds and staff will reflect in ADCNR activities for the short term.

The ADCNR staff has been working with the Legislatures and others to identify funding sources that is not as volatile as license sales.

Mississippi – **D. Diaz** reported that the MDMR is funded through many sources: federal projects; general funds; off-road fuel tax, license sales, tidelands and other programs. State-wide the budget shortfall is \$400 to \$500 million. Mississippi has been dealing with shrinking budgets for the past 4 years. The General Fund appropriations over the last 3 years are down about 35%, he anticipates further reductions.

Recreational license sales are down due to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill but commercial license sales are up. Unfortunately the increased sales do not make up for the decreases on the recreational side. MDMR will file a claim with British Petroleum (BP) to offset those losses.

He does not anticipate having to lay-off any staff at this time. Several positions are opened but have not been filled. It has been 3 to 5 years since staff has received any type of increase in salary.

Louisiana – **J. Shepard** reported the LDWF does not receive any General Funds which is a good thing since State-wide all agencies have been asked to reduce their budgets by 35%. LDWF was not asked to reduce their budget. He anticipates that they will be asked to reduce the LDWF budget by 5% and will be requested to release the overages in the Artificial Reef Program.

LDWF is funded with revenues from the sale of licenses, oil revenues, federal aid and the Artificial Reef Fund. Recreational license sales are down 25%, commercial licenses are stable. Louisiana will file a claim with BP to offset the reduction in recreational license sales.

BP has funded \$13 million worth research over the next three years. This will help LDWF in the short term.

Texas – **M. Ray** reported that TPWD was asked to reduce last year's budget by 5%. The Legislature will be meeting in January and has requested that the budget be reduced by 10%. State-wide Texas is projecting \$21 billion shortfall over the next 2 years.

The TPWD has submitted a budget with \$28 million in cuts.

### **Presentation of BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster**

At the request of the Commissioners **J. Rester** reported on the 2010 BP Oil Disaster. On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon, an oil drilling rig exploded. The rig was located approximately 50 miles southeast of the Mississippi River in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM). The explosion and the subsequent sinking of the rig caused oil to begin leaking from the well at a rate of 5,000 to 60,000 barrels a day causing an unknown impact on fish, crustaceans, marine mammals, sea turtles, birds, and the entire GOM.

He presented slides of satellite imagery to show where the oil was on the surface and to plot out fishery closures. These images showed how the oil progressed on a daily basis. He discussed the Gulf States individual actions dealing with the oil spill, including State fishery closures.

The oil slick produced by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill covered as much as 28,958 square miles. Teams of scientists and engineers stated that the daily flow rate decreased over the 87 days prior to the well's closure, beginning at about 62,000 barrels of oil per day and declining to 53,000 barrels per day before BP was able to cap the well on July 15.

Approximately 637 miles of Gulf Coast shoreline were covered in oil – approximately 362 miles in Louisiana, 109 miles in Mississippi, 70 miles in Alabama, and 96 miles in Florida.

More than 3.41 million feet of containment boom and 7.82 million feet of absorbent boom have been deployed to contain the spill. The combined boom deployed is equal to 2,127 miles.

He discussed the use of dispersants used to contain the oil spill. Over 8 dispersants were used. He pointed out that there was some controversy and EPA ordered certain dispersants (Coexit) not to be used. BP refused stating that this product was the best product for subsea application. The EPA and Coast Guard directed BP to reduce the amount of dispersants by 75%.

Oil alone was found to be more toxic than the eight dispersants when tested alone. The oil results for small fish were inconclusive.

**Rester** briefed the Commissioners on testing protocol to reopen closed waters. NOAA, FDA, EPA, and the Gulf States have implemented a comprehensive, coordinated multi-agency program to ensure that seafood from the GOM is safe to eat. So far, FDA and NMFS sampling have

not found contaminated fish or shellfish above the level of concern from any areas of the GOM affected by the oil spill.

It is still uncertain what the long-term impacts on fish and wildlife resources will be, how the oil and dispersed oil will affect juvenile and adult organism, and how it will affect eggs and larvae. Other unknowns are the possible subsurface plumes of the dispersed oil, impacts on coastal wetlands, and the economic impact of the disaster on fisheries, processors, fishing communities, and seafood dependent businesses.

A long term recovery plan will include the establishment of a Gulf Coast Recovery Council to lead in the long-term ecosystem, economic, and health recovery in the GOM. A portion of Clean Water Act civil penalties will be directed to the Gulf States to enable them to jumpstart their own recovery efforts. The Department of the Interior is working to implement necessary changes to speed the flow of remaining funds to the four eligible Gulf States (AL, MS, LA, and FL). This could send up to \$598 million in additional funding for the ecosystem of the GOM.

### **Overview of Oil Disaster Recovery/Stock Assessment Enhancement**

**R. Hode** discussed Gulf wide efforts that began May 2, 2010 with weekly conference calls with the State Marine Directors, NOAA, FDA and others involved in the recovery efforts. At first the calls were to exchange information regarding impacts, what areas were closed, and what was going on in all areas involved. Later on the calls dealt with the development of protocol for testing and ultimately opening of some of the waters. Finally they discussed ways and means of addressing these issue and how and what could be done at a Congressional level in aiding the recovery activities.

As a result, the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress passed a Supplemental Appropriations Bill that included provisions that made \$15 million available to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to provide for the fisheries disaster recovery. Funds were directed to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission by a cooperative agreement with NOAA.

The overall objective of the Oil Disaster Recovery Program (ODRP), following extensive coordination and collaboration with State Marine Directors, NOAA and the Southeast Regional Office of the National Marine Fisheries Service, is to work within the combined Gulf States marine agencies and related state seafood marketing organizations, and recreational and commercial fishing organizations to develop programs and projects designed to market Gulf seafood products and provide health and safety assurances for those products.

He gave an overview of the project and initial efforts. He will continue to keep all parties involved in the development of this grant informed of progress.

**D. Donaldson** reported The Stock Assessment Enhancement Program (SAE) portion was created in response to the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster. Congress allocated \$10M to conduct an expanded stock assessment of the fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico. Such expanded stock assessment shall include an assessment of the commercial and recreational catch and biological sampling, observer

programs, data management and processing activities, the conduct of assessments, and follow-up evaluations of such fisheries. The funds were appropriated to the Commission via a cooperative agreement and will be used to fund a variety of activities including state trip ticket operations, menhaden port sampling, implementation of for-hire logbook program and expansion of fishery-independent sampling in the Gulf of Mexico. These activities will be conducted from 2011 to 2015. A summary of the activities and budgeted amounts were provided.

### **Safety and Seafood Promotion Activities**

Florida - **V. Vail** stated that the FWC is not actually involved in the Seafood Safety and Promotion activities. It is not within their scope of authority, however the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has a Bureau of Aquaculture, Seafood Marketing and Seafood Product Safety. She reported the Bureau of Seafood Marketing has been very involved in wild caught Florida and Gulf seafood campaigns, in seafood cook-offs and chef competitions throughout the East and Northeast. The Bureau of Product Safety covers all agricultural products including seafood.

Alabama - **C. Blankenship** stated that following the initial sampling to get waters reopened, the ADCNR is doing supplemental testing of oyster reefs in areas that were not closed to ensure that they are safe. Alabama is currently negotiating with BP to fund a 3 year tissue sampling and testing program. He described the program and its functions.

Mississippi – **D. Diaz** reported that MDMR worked closely with Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and Mississippi State Chemistry Lab. Starting in April 2010, the DMR initiated offshore flights to find the leading edge of the oil and to track its proximity to the Mississippi shoreline. Over time they continued to track the oil and were able to direct skimmer boats to oil patches for removal. The DMR took 68 flights between April and August. The National Guard did 550 flights. This coordinated effort was a challenge but worked well in keeping track of and removing the oil when possible.

Constant communication with other agencies led to an extensive water sampling program (top and bottom) in the Mississippi Sound. No samples were found to have hydrocarbons. A tissue sampling program started on May 23, 2010. They sampled shrimp, finfish, crabs and oysters. They pulled 20 samples of each species two times a month through September. Starting in October they are sampling one time a month. To date the majority of these samples have come back non-detected for any hydrocarbons. The samples that have detected hydrocarbons have been 100s to 1000s of times below levels of concern.

He pointed out that there is a great deal of evidence that the seafood is safe for consumption but getting the word out to the public has not been that easy. He reported on other joint efforts that also showed that the seafood was safe. One very effective tool was the development of a newsletter printed in both English and Vietnamese that was mailed to all commercial license holders, processors and dealers. DMR also developed a logo “Gulf Safe”, which is on everything they print now including a brochure that is available to the public, hats, shirts, etc.

They will continue to sample once a month until public confidence is such that it is no longer necessary – whatever it takes – as long as it takes.

BP has been contacted to help fund the sampling and testing programs. There is no word yet on this outcome.

Louisiana – **J. Shepard** stated that the LDWF has done everything the other states have done. When sampling was begun it was originally a safety issue and to get a baseline for damages. As data was analyzed it quickly became evident that no levels of concern existed.

In conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Environmental Quality and Health and Hospitals they developed a plan. The plan was presented to BP and is still being negotiated. The original plan was for a 20 year project funded at \$500 million.

BP has offered to fund a 3 year program. If within the 3 years contamination was discovered, BP would extend the program another 3 years. To date nothing has been approved by Louisiana.

The major efforts in Louisiana right now are marketing their product.

Texas – **M. Ray** reported that Texas was largely spared from the impacts of the oil spill. The Department of Agriculture has a small seafood marketing group with little funding. The Health Department oversees seafood safety.

### **Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF)**

**S. VanderKooy** gave a status report of the various IJF projects. He provided a written report. Current activities include a revision of the Oyster FMP and a profile on sand and silver seatrout (*Arenarius*).

The revised Oyster FMP is expected to be complete after the beginning of 2011 and will then undergo the Commission's internal review with the first action taking place in March 2011.

The *Arenarius* TTF will meet in early January 2011, to finalize the draft Profile and approve it for the Commission's internal review. He anticipates that the final draft will be available for action by the TCC either at the March 2011 meeting or shortly thereafter.

### **SEAMAP Program Report**

**J. Rester** provided the Commissioners with a written report. In 2010, SEAMAP has almost completed its 29<sup>th</sup> year of fishery independent sampling. Current SEAMAP surveys include a Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey; a Winter, Spring, and Fall Plankton Survey; a Reefish Survey; an Inshore Longline Survey; and inshore fishery independent sampling.

The need for better and more fishery independent data became apparent with the oil spill this summer. The Commission fulfilled several data requests for SEAMAP in late April and early May.

SEAMAP is the only long-term dataset that can provide baseline conditions for Gulf of Mexico.

As part of the SEAMAP strategic planning process, SEAMAP sponsored a fishery independent data workshop that was held in September. Approximately 50 researchers from around the Gulf of Mexico attending to discuss current and future fishery independent data needs, collection methods to obtain the needed data, and survey designs for data collection.

SEAMAP is also in the process of revising and updating their 2011 to 2015 management plan. The SEAMAP management plan provides a statement of the current goals, management policies, procedures and priorities for all SEAMAP components and partnerships.

### **Sport Fish Restoration Program Report (SFP)**

**J. Ballard** provided a written report of SFP activities. He reported on the activities of the Artificial Reef Subcommittee. They are currently working with the TCC Habitat Subcommittee to discuss/revise their "Best Management Practices for Inshore Artificial Reefs" document and to develop a Gulf wide monitoring protocol for artificial reefs. **Ballard** is exploring funding opportunities to support artificial reef monitoring projects.

He reported on the development of a spread sheet of MARAD ships available for reefing with pertinent information (year built, size, type, etc) and will make it available on the GSMFC's website under the artificial reef program.

The TCC Fisheries Outreach Subcommittee and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Outreach and Education Committee will hold a joint meeting in January 2011. The focus of the GSMFC's Subcommittee's section of the meeting will be on ways our member states can unify key outreach programs across the entire Gulf region.

The TCC Fisheries Outreach Subcommittee will be assisting the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee of the new Oil Disaster Recovery Program to achieve their oil disaster outreach and marketing goals.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.



**COMMISSION BUSINESS MEETING  
MINUTES – 61st Annual Meeting  
Thursday, October 21, 2010  
Clearwater Beach, Florida**

**Chairman V. Vail** called the meeting to order at 8:37 am.

The following Commissioners and/or proxies were present:

**Commissioners**

Chris Blankenship, ADCNR/MRD, Gulf Shores, AL (*Proxy for Vernon Minton*)  
Chris Nelson, Bon Secour Fisheries, Inc., Bon Secour, AL  
Spencer Collier, Alabama Legislature, Irvington, AL  
Virginia Vail, FWC, Tallahassee, FL (*Proxy for Ken Haddad*)  
Stephen Greep, Ft. Lauderdale, FL  
Thad Altman, Florida Legislature, Melbourne, FL  
Camp Matens, Baton Rouge, LA  
Joe Shepard, LDWF, Baton Rouge (*Proxy for Randy Pausina*)  
Mike Ray, TPWD, Austin, TX (*Proxy for Carter Smith*)  
Dale Diaz, MDMR, 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, Chief Financial Officer, Ocean Springs, MS  
James Ballard, SFP/ANS Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Others**

Judy Jamison, Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Tampa, FL  
Ellie Roche, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Steve Meyers, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD

**L. Simpson** took the opportunity to recognize two long-term employees, Cheryl R. Noble, SEAMAP/Habitat Staff Assistant and Dave M. Donaldson, Assistant Director. Both have been

employed by the Commission for 20 years plus. He spoke very highly of both employees and highlighted their many contributions over their years of service. On behalf of the Commission he presented a token of appreciation for 20 years of service.

### **Fisheries Information Network (FIN) Report**

**D. Donaldson** provided a written report on current FIN program activity. The FIN program is now in its 13<sup>th</sup> year. He reported that in 2011 they will continue with ongoing activities, including: Coordination and Administration of FIN Activities, Collecting, Managing and Disseminating Marine Recreational Fisheries Data (he pointed out that FIN will be administering the recreational survey for Puerto Rico in 2011), Head Boat Port Sampling in Texas and Florida, Operations of FIN Data Management System, Biological Sampling of Commercial and Recreational Catches, and Improvement of Quality and Completeness of Marine Recreational Fishing License/Registry Databases.

The FIN program is now funded close to \$6 million, the actual total is \$5,959,000.

Trip ticket programs will not be funded under FIN in 2011. It is currently being funded under the SAE Program but only for 2011.

### **Habitat Program Report**

**J. Rester** gave a brief overview of the Joint Habitat Program established in 1997 with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC). As part of this program **J. Rester** has reviewed the 2005 EFH Amendment as part of the required 5-year EFH review process defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The final report will be reviewed next week at the Council meeting. Based on this report, the Council and NMFS will determine the need to revise the EFH designations and descriptions. The 5-Year EFH Review Report includes sections reviewing existing EFH descriptions and designations by life stage for errors; evaluating new information available since the 2005 EFH Amendment for EFH descriptions and designations; determining possible new methods of designating EFH; evaluating how species specific EFH identifications and descriptions can be better presented in addition to the FMP description; making recommendations on whether EFH descriptions should be updated; reviewing any changes and new information on fishing impacts that may adversely affect EFH; reviewing any changes and new information on non-fishing impacts that may adversely affect EFH; reviewing habitat areas of particular concern (HAPC) designations; determining if current HAPC designations are adequate or if areas need to be removed or added.

A literature review provided new information on some managed species' habitat utilization, but did not provide any information that would dramatically alter current EFH designations and descriptions. The report did incorporate SEAMAP plankton data that was used to map the distribution and abundance of larval fish and shrimp. The larval fish and shrimp mapping represents a significant gain in knowledge for describing and designating EFH for the early life history of managed species. A section of the report details new methodologies for designating EFH. While many new models and methods exist, they require the appropriate data inputs to produce accurate results. Brown

shrimp were used to demonstrate a correlation based habitat model with SEAMAP trawl data. SEAMAP trawl data could also possibly be used to produce EFH maps for white shrimp, juvenile red snapper, and possibly other managed species. Unfortunately, data are lacking for most managed species across their entire ranges and life cycles. However, other data sources (e.g., NMFS longline monitoring) may be suitable fisheries independent data for refined EFH maps for additional managed species (e.g., red snapper) or age classes.

The 5-Year EFH Review Report will be submitted to the NMFS before the end of the year.

### **Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Program Report**

**J. Ballard** provided a written report on ANS activities. He reviewed the legislation that established the ANS Task Force and Panels. (The Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990, which was amended by the National Invasive Species Act of 1996.)

**J. Ballard** oversees the activities of the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel, established in 1999 under the Gulf of Mexico Program. The Commission took responsibility of the panel in 2002. He reviewed the make-up of the Panel.

Currently Georgia, Louisiana and South Carolina have completed ANS plans that are approved. Alabama and Mississippi finished plans and will submit them to the ANS TF in the spring of 2010 for approval. Florida, Texas and North Carolina are in various stages of completing and submitting ANS plans.

The Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel (GSARP) on Aquatic Invasive Species held its Spring meeting on April 27-28, 2010 in Gulfport, Mississippi.

The Program Coordinator attended/participated in the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF) spring meeting held May 5-6, 2010 in Portland, Maine.

He reviewed the status of the various State Aquatic Nuisance Species Plans: Georgia, Louisiana and South Carolina have completed plans and are actively implementing them. Alabama and Mississippi are incorporating comments from the ANSTF into their plans and will soon submit their final plan to the ANSTF for approval. Florida has a completed plan but it has not been approved by the ANSTF. Texas will soon submit the final draft of their plan to the ANSTF for review. North Carolina is in the preliminary stages of formulating their plan.

**J. Ballard** reported that he is working with GSARP and exploring other funding possibilities to secure money so the Panel can start to be more proactive in their efforts to monitor and control aquatic invasive species in the Gulf and South Atlantic Region.

The Panel is keeping a close eye on the spread of lionfish. The number of lionfish sightings along the east coast and in the Caribbean is continuing to increase. Along with expanding its range, lionfish densities in the invaded range are reaching levels four times higher than in their native range. In December 2009, two specimens were collected north of the Yucatan which were the first confirmed

sighting in the Gulf of Mexico. In 2010 lionfish have continued to spread with over 50 sightings in Gulf waters with 5 from the northern Gulf.

The Panel's Information Management Work Group will review and update the content of the new GSARP's website to make sure it stays as current as possible.

The Panel's Rapid Response Work Group has drafted a new rapid response plan that incorporates the Incident Command System and elements of other plans that have been used across the country. The Work Group held a meeting in July to review/edit this new document and will be presenting it to the full Panel at their meeting in October.

The Panel voted to accept and start enacting the new 2010-2014 Strategic Plan at their spring 2010 meeting.

The Fall GSARP meeting is set for October 27-28, 2010 in St. Petersburg, Florida.

The Fall ANSTF meeting is set for November 3-4, 2010 in Arlington, Virginia.

At **L. Simpson's** request **J. Ballard** gave a power point presentation on the current status of the lionfish.

### **Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP I & II) Report**

**R. Hode** provided the Commissioners with a written report. He gave a PowerPoint presentation which addressed spending by state within each of the sub award categories for both EDRP I and EDRP II.

In regards to EDRP I, on spending over the past 48 months, the oyster element continues to be positioned for completion within the grant period. To date, 83 percent of the budgeted work has been completed; however, the balance of this work, which amounts to approximately \$8 million, will depend to a large extent on reef monitoring results following the DWH disaster. GSMFC will work closely with impacted states to amend budgets as necessary to address any new needs that may be defined as a result of post Oil Disaster reef assessment.

Although the Habitat Restoration component has shown significant progress over the past several months, (reflecting an increase of nearly 25 percent in spending) it remains behind other components as the initial grant period nears completion. Combined expenditures increased from \$15.1 million in March 2010 to nearly \$18.9 in September, but the program has an unspent balance of \$10.7 million.

Monthly expenditures over the next twenty four months will need to be approximately \$450 thousand in order to meet extended grant time lines. The GSMFC will continue to monitor all amendments to ensure that amended work programs and related budgets remain within approved standards.

The Cooperative Resource component has seen nearly a 70 percent increase in its overall budget – primarily the result of increased emphasis by Louisiana on its analysis of post disaster fisheries economic recovery. To date, approximately 80 percent of this category budget has been spent; the

majority of which was seen in Alabama and Louisiana, where trip report programs in Alabama and post Katrina analysis of Louisiana's fisheries industry recovery are under way. Even with increased spending, it is suspected that other cooperative research effort was curtailed during the past several months because of the DWH disaster.

Given the increasing time constraints, it is expected that recipient states will continue their efforts, over the next eleven months, to put their allocations to use before the grant period ends. But, because of limitations imposed by the DWH disaster, as well as previously defined constraints, some of the remaining work is expected to be re-examined and possibly re-programmed. As a result, further no-cost grant extensions will likely be requested by the States in order to extend recovery opportunities. Further, it is expected that additional sub award amendments will be requested in order to meet redefined recovery needs.

EDRP II progress, with the exception of Domestic Product Marketing and Seafood Testing efforts, is well on its way to meeting the congressional intent of getting economic assistance to those fishermen and industries that were impacted by the storms of 2005. As previously indicated the TED/BRD requirement is complete; and it is expected that the remaining work in this supplement will continue as the states follow up with efforts to locate those fishermen who are qualified but, because of relocation, may not have received assistance where they were eligible. Efforts are also expected to be made to conduct additional work that is considered "indirect assistance" that will provide long-term benefit to both the fishermen and the industry within each of the Gulf States.

### **Economic Data Program (EDP) Report**

**A. Miller** provided a written report and gave a power point presentation. The three main components are economic data collection, economic research and analysis, and economic outreach and dissemination.:

In conjunction with the Fisheries Information Networks' (FIN) Social/Economic Workgroup, the GSMFC coordinates, plans, and conducts specific economic data collection projects throughout its five member states

An economic survey of the inshore shrimp fleet was the most well developed project under the economic data collection component of the program during the fall of 2010. Cited as one of the most valuable fisheries in United States, the GOM commercial shrimp fishery constitutes fishing pressure from both an offshore fleet as well as an inshore shrimp fleet.

As fisheries management policies change, the economic consequences of these actions extend past commercial fishing fleets to supporting fishing related businesses. Understanding the links between specific fisheries industries and the regional economy can be helpful in determining the potential impacts of management decisions. The Commission's economics program is, therefore, in the process of collecting data to determine the economic performance and the economic contributions that shoreside firms have on local and regional economies. The availability of unbiased, systematic economic data of this nature should assist fisheries managers, commercial fishing-related business

owners, and others who utilize the Gulf's resources in the formation of informed management decisions.

A recreational fishery in the marine environment provides not only relaxation for stakeholders but also stimulation to the surrounding economy. In the GOM, for example, millions of residents participate in marine fisheries recreation, which contributes millions to tens of millions of dollars each year to the economy. A continued understanding of how marine angler expenditures influence local and regional economies in the GOM through sales, income, and employment, provides key economic information, which can be used in fisheries management decisions. The GSMFC and NOAA, therefore, plan to solicit saltwater anglers' expenditures on fishing trips throughout the states in order to assess the size and economic contribution of the marine recreational fishing industry to the GOM and the United States.

Economic impacts from recreation to the local and regional economy also extend from other types of marine recreation besides marine angling. Such economic impacts might include expenditures from bird watching, kayaking, canoeing, sailing, etc. Determination of the economic impacts that these activities have on the economy is an important aspect of marine recreation that needs additional attention.

While economic data from initial collection activities is often presented in a simplistic format, further analysis and research investigations allow for a better understanding of the economic performance and impact of Gulf fisheries. Currently, the research and analysis component of the economics program consists of an impact analysis initiative for gulf fishing industries and a study of the influence that macroeconomic factors (e.g. fuel prices) have on marine recreational angler effort throughout the Gulf.

State and Federal policymakers continue to struggle with making difficult decisions concerning the management of marine recreational fisheries throughout the Gulf of Mexico. Policymakers have heretofore largely relied on science-based limits, which use effort estimates, to define how many fish can be removed while still investing in the future integrity of the stock. While the problem of stock depletion is definable using biological limits, getting to a welfare improving solution is a challenging integration of legal, economic, and ecological interactions and biological complications. Therefore, understanding how the quantity and distribution of recreational fishing effort responds to macroeconomic factors may be beneficial to the policy process. This study investigates the influence that macroeconomic variables such as fuel price, unemployment, and state-level gross domestic product (GDP) have on the quantity and distribution of marine recreational fishing effort throughout the Gulf of Mexico. This project was largely developed throughout 2010. Preliminary results indicate that macroeconomic variables, such as fuel prices, GDP, and unemployment influence the quantity and distribution of marine recreational fishing effort in the GOM.

While raw economic data allow for descriptive statistics and averages, economic impact analysis (e.g. input/output modeling) for a particular fishery can help us to better understand the economic contribution that a fishery has on the local and regional economy throughout the Gulf. For example, impact analysis can be used to describe taxes, employment, income, value-added, and sales generated from a particular Gulf fishery.

The third component of the economics program is outreach and dissemination. The objective of this branch of the program is to present the information collected and analyzed within the data collection and research and analysis components of the program. Additionally, this component of the program involves the organization of an annual or biennial meeting for economists and associated stakeholders who are interested in or actively engaged in fisheries economic projects and activities throughout the Gulf.

In order for there to be a location where stakeholders of fisheries resources can log-on and access fisheries economic data, the Commission successfully worked with the NMFS headquarters office in order to develop a national interactive fisheries economic impacts tool. The GSMFC is also developing an interactive dashboard that will enable web users the ability to access economic data as well as economic impact information for selected Gulf fisheries.

The Gulf States Fisheries Economics Workshop is an initiative of the economics program that is aimed at promoting communication, coordination, and professional development among fisheries economists and associated stakeholders throughout the Gulf of Mexico. The workshop provides an opportunity to share data collections and research projects and to discuss the future direction of fisheries economics within the region.

### **Executive Committee Report**

**V. Vail** reported that the Executive Committee met on Wednesday, October 20, 2010. The Committee received a report on the 2009 audit. The report indicated that a material finding in Internal Control over a major federal award program was identified. **W. Garner** pointed out that the finding was brought to the auditor's attention at the beginning of the audit process. A policy has been implemented to monitor major award advances and payments in the future to avoid errors. Additionally a new accountant was hired to monitor all major federal awards. The Commission currently administers 50 plus sub-awards and contracts. **J. Gill moved to accept the 2009 audit report. C. Perret seconded. The audit was accepted.**

The Executive Committee reviewed the current Financial Report and recommended it be accepted. **J. Gill moved to accept the financial report. C. Perret seconded. The report was accepted.**

**V. Vail** stated that the Committee reviewed the proposed 2011 Budget. The Commission currently administers 15 major federal programs. The Committee recommended the approval of the FY2011 Budget in the amount of \$13,573,003 (including two new hires). The FY2010 budget was \$6.5 million. **C. Perret moved to approve the FY2011 budget. J. Gill seconded. The budget was approved.**

The Executive Committee reviewed personnel evaluations. They recommended a 4% increase or minimum of \$1,000 for all employees except those employed under one year. In addition, they increased Dave Donaldson by \$4,000; Nancy Marcellus by \$2,000; Cheryl Nobel by \$1,000; and Joe Ferrer by \$1,000. **J. Gill moved to accept the recommended increases. M. Ray seconded. The recommendation was approved.**

## State Director's Reports

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

Florida was less directly impacted by the Deepwater Horizon incident than other Gulf States; only state nearshore waters from Escambia Bay [Pensacola] to the Alabama state line were closed because of the presence of oil and tar balls; both have been recovered from panhandle beaches. However, significant response costs were incurred in pro-active attempts to minimize the potential for damage to the resources along the Gulf Coast and to address a national/international perception that Florida's beaches and fishing were shut down because of the oil spill. As of August 27<sup>th</sup>, state and local governments had received \$110 million from BP Oil for response and economic recovery efforts: \$50 million was allocated to local governments for response and recovery; \$32 million was allocated for promotion of tourism by local governments and VISIT FLORIDA; \$8 million was allocated to the Department of Environmental Protection for state Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) activities; \$7 million was allocated for employment and training opportunities for those without jobs because of the oil spill; \$10 million was allocated for research on oil spill impacts; and \$3 million was allocated for mental health care. In addition, the Florida has requested \$159 million from BP for quality control monitoring/testing of Gulf fish and shellfish.

Florida's Department of Environmental Protection is the lead agency for the response to Deepwater Horizon event. Pursuant to statutory direction, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Wildlife Research Institute [FWRI] provides technical support and response to the Department of Environmental Protection for oil spills, ship groundings, major marine species die-offs, hazardous spills, and natural disasters. In addition, the Divisions of Marine Fisheries Management [DMFM], Habitat and Species Conservation [HSC, imperiled species management], and Law Enforcement [LE] provided staff and equipment for response to the incident. Staff efforts included aerial surveillance flights to map extent of observed oil and check reports of reported oil slicks, production of maps, interagency and interstate response planning and coordination, wildlife protection, recovery and rehabilitation, and shore/beach monitoring and clean up. Response costs incurred by the FWC through August 2010 totaled just over \$7 million, not including an estimated \$8 million that is needed to replace equipment [vessels, vehicles, trailers, ATVs, motors]. To date [August], reimbursements totaling \$2.4 million have been requested.

The FWC issued several Executive Orders in response to the economic impact Deepwater Horizon was having and might have on the commercial and recreational fisheries and associated businesses. The Orders opened certain fishing seasons [Apalachicola Bay oysters, bay scallops] a little early, extended the Biscayne Bay food shrimp season by one month, waived the regional two week blue crab season closures for the current fishing year, and extended the June 30 expiration date of commercial saltwater fishing licenses to September 30. These actions allowed harvest ahead of possible fisheries closures in case oil were to reach Florida waters; the 90 day extension of the license meant fishers would not have to pay for a license they later couldn't use if state waters had to be closed to fishing. The permit requirements for a vessel to enter Manatee



No Entry Zones and Manatee Motorboat Prohibited Zones were waived to facilitate and expedite oil spill response efforts, but transit plans had to be filed with law enforcement and a “manatee observer” had to be present when vessels were transiting the zones.

With reference to wildlife impacts: Birds - 495 visibly oiled birds [25 species, but mostly northern gannets] were recovered; 401 were recovered dead or died in rehab, 33 have been released and 61 are still in a rehabilitation facility. In addition 723 not visibly oiled birds were recovered dead but have not been necropsied to determine the cause of death. Sea turtles – 142 visibly oiled turtles were recovered; 2 died, 127 recovered and were released, and 13 are in rehabilitation facilities. In addition, 257 turtle nests from panhandle beaches were relocated to Canaveral National Seashore/ Kennedy Space Center area and nearly 16,000 hatchlings, mostly loggerhead sea turtles, were subsequently released into those waters. Manatees – no manatees were found to be affected by the oil spill. One visibly oiled dolphin was rescued.

**V. Vail updated the Commissioners on the January 2010 Extreme Cold Event.** With reference to snook, this popular game species is very sensitive to cold and many died during the prolonged cold spell. The Commission extended the annual winter closed season through September 16<sup>th</sup> to give the population additional time for recovery, especially during the spring spawning season. During this time staff evaluated the cold’s impact using data from the long-term fishery independent monitoring [FIM] projects in Tampa Bay, Charlotte Harbor and the north and south regions of the Indian River Lagoon, angler surveys, Everglades National Park creel surveys, and FWRI’s snook acoustic tag program. FIM data on monthly abundance, yearly abundance and length frequency for the period January – June 2010 were compared to similar data for the same periods over the years 1997 – 2009. Angler catch rates for January – June 2010 were compared to those in January – June 2002-2009. In summary, snook abundance in each location is the lowest it’s been in 13 years; the length-frequency distribution trend is increasing indicating fewer small snook are present. Catch rates of adult snook varied by coast: in the Indian River Lagoon on the east coast there was no discernable change from historic catch rates; on the Gulf Coast all catch rates were down from previous years; catch rates in the Everglades National Park showed a sharp decline from the increasing trend in previous years. After reviewing this information, the Commission opened the snook season on the Atlantic coast; the winter season closure for east coast snook on December 15 remains in effect. The Commission extended the prohibition on harvest of snook from Gulf waters [including the Florida Keys] until 1 September 2011. Catch and release fishing for snook is allowed during a closed season. Other fish species are being similarly monitored for future assessments.

With reference to manatees, 2010 has not been a good year. Through mid-September 651 dead manatees have been documented, well above the five year average of 288 for this time period. Of the 651 deaths, 245 were due cold stress (5 year average: 26), 172 from undetermined causes (5 year average: 61), and 67 unrecovered (5 year average: 7). It’s possible that the high numbers in the undetermined and unrecovered categories had something to do with the extreme cold, but data is inconclusive. The previous record of 429 manatee deaths in one year occurred in 2009.

**Legislative Update** - The 2010 Legislature repealed the \$7.50 fee established last year for the resident saltwater shoreline fishing license; residents not otherwise exempt from holding a fishing license are still required to have this free license to fish from shore. For FY 2010/2011,

the FWC received \$1.14 million in General Revenue funds from the Legislature to mitigate the loss of this license revenue. The Legislature also enacted a law that prohibits the use, possession, breeding, sale, trade, or barter of any species on the list of Commission designated Reptiles of Concern (e.g., pythons, Nile monitor lizards) and authorized the assessment of civil fines of up to \$10,000 per animal for violations involving importation of prohibited reptiles. A bill that would have exempted eligible commercial fishers age 65 and over from the \$50 fee commercial saltwater products license fee failed to pass.

With reference to the state budget, the Florida Legislature faced some very difficult decisions. The FWC, with 1947 FTEs and a budget of almost \$300 million, feels fortunate because, unlike at other agencies, no positions were eliminated and only \$1.8 million in actual program funds was cut. A \$4.6 million reduction in the Commission's General Revenue Trust Fund appropriation was compensated for by shifting those budgets to other trust funds. And \$10 million in cash balances was swept from two trust funds to meet other state needs. Fund shifts and cash sweeps do not have an immediate impact on program spending or services provided, but they do limit the funds available for future program activities (both recurring and non-recurring needs). However, many of our significant budget requests - related to land management, land acquisition, youth hunting and fishing programs, artificial reef construction, boating improvement projects - were approved.

State employees will not see a salary increase again this year, but neither will they see a pay cut by salary reduction or furlough or have start contributing to the state retirement program this year; the health insurance subsidy for retirees was not eliminated. However, state employees previously exempt from paying a portion of their health insurance premiums will now contribute \$100 per year for single coverage and \$360 per year for family coverage. Health insurance premiums in general increased by 5% but the state will cover this increase.

Although the FY 2010/2011 budget has been approved, if anticipated revenues are less than the appropriations there may be additional budget cuts (maybe 5%) during the year. If the outlook for revenue collections does not improve for FY 2011/2012, budgets could be further reduced by possibly 10-15% in the 2012 legislative session. If this occurs, the Commission would likely have to cut staff positions and programs.

#### **Other FWC News –**

Artificial Reefs Program - National Geographic Magazine is currently working on an article on artificial reefs featuring photographs by Underwater Photographer David Doubilet. Several Florida artificial reef vessels will be included in the magazine including the *Hoyt Vandenberg*, the *Oriskany*, the *Duane*, including some unintentional wrecks like the *Benwood* sunk for target practice in the Keys as well as some east coast sites as far north as North Carolina including a German U-boat (U-352 sunk off Morehead City, NC by Coast Guard Cutter during WWII).

In August 2010 Dr. David Palandro of the FWC Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and a team of half a dozen divers inspected the aircraft carrier *Oriskany* [sunk off Pensacola] for evidence of visible subsurface oil. No oil was found. There are plans to search for residual oil on several other artificial reefs in deeper waters off Florida, Alabama and Mississippi.

Five artificial reef construction projects are scheduled for the Gulf this year (2010-2011): Citrus County [Crystal River], Pinellas County [St Petersburg], Bay County [Panama City], and Okaloosa County [Destin] using secondary use concrete products or concrete reef modules. In addition a large University of Florida Project consisting of 450 patch reefs (each composed of four concrete cubes 3 ft on a side with 24" opening through centers) to be deployed seaward of gag grouper juvenile sea grass habitat in the Florida Big Bend area in an to attempt to enhance survival/fitness of young of year grouper moving out of sea grass habitat in search of hard bottom structure. In the last fiscal year (2009-2010) seven artificial reef construction projects resulted in the development of 13 new patch reefs, and six monitoring projects in which 207 patch reefs were monitored.

Lionfish. On September 9, 2010 during an inspection dive on Escambia County's "George Wilkins" Goliath Reef Ball artificial reef system, FWC staff observed a lone lionfish (*Pterois sp*), about 5 inches long, resting among fouling organisms on the exterior of a 4,000 pound hollow "Goliath" reef ball (vertical relief about 3.5 ft, base diameter feet) in 90-91 feet of water south of Pensacola Pass. The reef ball was on sand substrate about 30-40 feet from its nearest neighbor reef balls. This is the most northerly and westerly Florida Gulf Coast lionfish observation (see: U.S. Geological Survey map: <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/taxgroup/fish/lionfishdistribution.aspx>). Manatee County (waters off Cortez) appears to be the next most northerly Florida Gulf Coast sighting with the exception of a dead specimen found off Pinellas County (presumed aquarium dump) in 2006. (Note: since September 9, a lionfish has been documented from waters off Alabama).

Also, within the last year lionfish sightings in the Florida Keys and Southeast Florida on both natural and artificial reefs have increased dramatically. Over 580 lionfish were brought in during a local tournament sponsored by the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary the weekend of Sept. 11-12, 2010. The very first documented lionfish sighting in the Florida Keys was off Key Largo in January 2009 and the specimen was removed. This may not bode well for the northern Gulf of Mexico as lionfish apparently can tolerate temperatures as low as 56 degrees. F.

Regulatory Actions: In the last six months Commissioners approved rules that: extend Florida's regulations governing harvest of bonefish (1 fish bag, 18" minimum size, hook & line gear only, no commercial harvest) to federal waters; capped the number of commercial ballyhoo/lampara net endorsements issued at the current level of 17, limited the number of endorsements a person could hold to two, and allowed transfer ballyhoo endorsements; brought Florida's regulations for swordfish and Spanish mackerel into consistency with the federal swordfish and Spanish mackerel regulations; allowed oyster harvesters to be on the water and at oyster beds as long as the tongs were stowed before sunrise so they would have more time to fish before delivering product to the dock by 11:30 am in the summer (noon in other months); established a weakfish management area in Northeast Florida wherein the very similar sand sea trout, weakfish and their hybrids are to be considered weakfish and any outside that management area are to be considered sand sea trout; and within the management area reduced the recreational weakfish bag limit from four to one and established a 100 pound commercial harvest/possession limit. In addition the Commissioners directed staff to proceed with proposals that would alternate years for the regional 10 day blue crab fishery closures on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts established to facilitate

trap retrieval and specify that blue crab endorsements could be transferred between eligible parties from May 1 through February 28 each year) and establish Northwest, Northeast and South management regions for red drum and increase the recreational bag limit from one to two in the Northwest and Northeast regions.

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

The Alabama Marine Resources Division (MRD) Director, Vernon Minton, has taken a leave of absence due to health reasons. Major Chris Blankenship (MRD Chief Enforcement Officer) has been named Acting Director in Vernon's absence.

Little River Bay marsh rehabilitation project located near Bayou La Batre has been completed. Funding for this project is provided through the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP). This work was anticipated to be completed earlier in the year, but was postponed due to DWH.

EDRP fisherman assistance programs have been extended through November 30, 2010. Reports could not be completed due to closure of some state and federal waters in response to the oil spill.

MRD coordinated the relay of over 6 million pounds of oysters and cultch material from reclassified waters in upper Mobile Bay to a newly constructed reef in lower Mobile. This new reef will be opened for harvest for a limited time period in October.

A SEAMAP summer cruise was completed with one station omitted due to the presence of surface oil. MRD and Dauphin Island Sea Lab through the SEAMAP program have begun a fishery-independent vertical line survey. Survey will address reef fish abundances on structured and unstructured environments, age composition and selectivity patterns for varying hook sizes.

The Fisheries Section began using a new online Conservation Operations Reporting On Numerous Activities (CORONA) to complete weekly, monthly and fleet maintenance reports. This system has replaced paper reporting for these reports and eliminated duplicate data entry. All cost of maintenance and operations will be tracked more efficiently and reports can be produced in a timely manner.

MRD's Fishery-Independent Assessment Monitoring Program (FAMP) samples were collected and processed for biological/hydrographic data at monthly intervals to maintain continuity of the 30-year program. Bi-monthly catch reports were submitted to GSMFC.

MRD created a data entry program, AMRD Sampling Application (ASA), in order to increase the efficiency of recording, editing, and proof reading data generated from the FAMP program. FAMP protocols have been restructured in order to generate data that is consistent with the SEAMAP groundfish program.

MRD participated in a number of public outreach events. One event in particular was the annual

children's art calendar contest where area 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students participate. Submissions were judged by local artisans and the winners will be displayed in MRD's 2011 Children's Art Calendar.

MRD met with the Auburn Shellfish Laboratory for the development of a small oyster aquaculture operation. Seed oysters were provided to a couple of local private lease holders by the AU shellfish lab for growth studies utilizing three different farming configurations.

In September 2010, Governor Bob Riley approved the plan for TORP's Bienville Offshore Energy Terminal (BOET). The LNG terminal will be located 63 miles south of Alabama and will utilize a closed-loop regassification system.

Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) funds have been awarded to MRD for much needed renovation and construction activities within the Division. Plans include the construction of a new laboratory and office facility at Claude Petet Mariculture Center (Gulf Shores) and the renovation of boat basins located at Divisional offices in Gulf Shores and on Dauphin Island.

MRD collected a total of 1,291 MRFSS interviews between March 1 – August 31, 2010. However noticeable decreases in intercepts were observed during the oil spill.

Enforcement Section - The Alabama Legislature passed an Oyster Management Bill that will allow the MRD to better manage our oyster resources. The bill will allow for the implementation of oyster management stations to allow us to better record the amount and condition of harvest. The bill also changed the tolerance for undersize oysters, standardized the information required on the harvest tags, allowed an increase in the cost of the tags to include the cost of printing, expanded the use of dredges, removed the ability for private lease holders and others to take seed oysters from the public reefs, expanded our oversight of the marking of private leases, created a shell fee to pay for planting and other oyster management costs, and raised the fines for violations.

A regulation was signed by the Commissioner of Conservation that brought our current "Saltwater Fish, Creel, Bag, Possession, and Size Limits" more in line with federal regulations concerning prohibited sharks and other prohibited species. This regulation also made it illegal for a vessel under the jurisdiction of Alabama to possess a red drum in federal waters.

An updated "Commercial Taking and Landing of Gulf Reef Fish" regulation was signed that closes Alabama waters to the harvest of any Gulf Reef Fish species when adjacent federal waters are closed to the commercial harvest of that Gulf Reef Fish species. Previously the regulation only included red snapper. It also made it illegal for anyone to buy or sell reef fish that are managed under an individual fishing quota unless the dealer is permitted to purchase said fish and has the correct endorsement. The regulation also made it a state requirement for commercial fishermen landing Gulf Reef Fish in Alabama that are managed under an individual fishing quota to abide by the provisions of 50 CFR Part 622 for the landing, offloading, transporting and reporting of Gulf Reef Fish. This regulation went into effect on June 20, 2010.

The “Open Season for Gulf Reef Fish Species” regulation was promulgated that states that any time federal waters adjacent to Alabama are closed to the recreational harvest of any Gulf Reef Fish species that Alabama waters will also be closed to the taking of that species. Previously the regulation only included red snapper. This regulation went into effect on March 18, 2010.

The “Use of Nets and Harvest of Mullet” regulation was updated to make some much need changes for clarity of the regulation and to assist the fishermen by simplifying some of the closures.

The MRD Enforcement Section was awarded the NOAA Cooperative Enforcement Program “Excellence of Quality Award” at the 2010 Cooperative Enforcement Conference in Miami, Florida. The award was presented for demonstrated excellence in leadership, strategic planning, industry focus, knowledge management, workforce focus, innovation, process management and results in the area of marine conservation law enforcement.

MRD Oil Spill Response and Activities - MRD contributed significant personnel time and resources to the oil spill response. Numerous staff members were assigned to the Mobile Unified Incident Command post to assist in Alabama’s coordinated response to the Deep Water Horizon (DWH) incident.

MRD responded to fish kills, turtle/mammal stranding, and surface oil reported through the DWH call center. Reports were highly elevated due to protocols of response workers and the vigilance of the public.

MRD collected baseline, monitoring and reopening tissue samples for finfish, oysters, crabs, and shrimp.

MRD Enforcement Officers operated continuous patrols to enforce area closures and conducted daily mapping surveys of deployed booms. Boom coordinates were relayed daily to UIC for use in booming strategy and maintenance.

MRD has been working closely with Natural Resource Disaster Assessment (NRDA) process especially in the development of the oyster assessment plan.

Alabama began closing state waters to commercial and recreation fishing as a precautionary measure due to the presence of oil on June 1. By June 10, the final closure was implemented resulting in a total closure area of approximately 351 square miles representing around 45% of Alabama’s marine waters. From the initial date of closure to the final date for reopening (with exception to Gulf waters for shrimp), a total of 81 days had elapsed.

Alabama’s shrimp opening, which typically occurs in June, was delayed until July 23 due to the threat of oil. Only waters not closed in response to the oil spill were opened for shrimping.

The oil spill has resulted in significant economic losses for coastal Alabama. Two of the hardest hit industries have been the tourist and seafood industries although accurate estimates of these

losses are not available at this time. MRD has observed a preliminary sales decrease of 67% in the number of recreational saltwater fishing licenses issued during 2010 as compared to 2009 for the May through August time period. This decrease represents a loss of \$650,000.

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

Enforcement - The Office of Marine Patrol, JEA Marine Law Enforcement activities for April 2010 – September 2010 consisted of 5,433 boat patrol hours with 2052 contacts, which resulted in 326 total citations. These citations mostly consisted of violations concerning red snapper and sharks.

Office of Marine Fisheries - The Office of Marine Fisheries participated in three public meetings related to seafood safety. This was to communicate to our constituents sampling efforts and laboratory results that have been completed to ensure the safety of Mississippi seafood.

Staff continues to sample shrimp, finfish, crabs and oyster tissues bi-weekly (monthly starting in October) from the Mississippi Sound. Tissues from these samples are sent to the Mississippi State Chemical Laboratory for PAH analysis. The state also collected tissue samples for analysis by NOAA and the FDA. These samples were collected and tested according to FDA protocol and all Mississippi waters were open to commercial and recreational harvest of seafood during August.

Personnel from the Office of Marine Fisheries have also been sampling shrimp in federal waters, which were recently opened to commercial fishing, off the Mississippi coast. This sampling has been in cooperation with several commercial fishermen by order of the Governor's Commission on the Deepwater Horizon Response.

Shrimp and Crab Bureau - Staff participated in Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival and the Pascagoula River Nature Festival to encourage terrapin education, crab trap TED use and help with installation. Outreach to MS crabbers and trap builders has resulted in over 2,584 crab traps (10,334 TEDs) equipped to protect terrapins.

2010-2011 Live Bait Shrimp Dealer inspections and licensing of sixteen dealers, thirteen vessels and six transport vehicles were completed.

The Bureau Director was deployed to the Mobile, AL Deepwater Horizon Incident Command Center from April 29 through July. She was active in the Environmental Planning Section protecting sensitive areas including on-going boom strategies and shoreline cleanup policies, as well as guidance for the Vessel of Opportunity Program (VOO). Bureau staff has been instrumental in extensive baseline and response sampling and sentinel flights.

Mississippi waters opened to shrimping on June 3, 2010 at 6 a.m. Good catches were reported on opening day, however only 70 vessels were counted in an aerial survey. After many area closures resulting from encroaching oil, ALL Mississippi waters were closed to shrimping (along with all other fisheries) July 1-30, 2010.

Mississippi shrimp landings to date are down 81% mainly due to the closures brought on by the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. Effort has also much lower than normally expected, with most of

Mississippi shrimp fleet working for BP in the Vessels of Opportunity Program.

The National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, using BP monies, is funding on-going DMR projects to address potential increased recreational and commercial fisheries interactions with sea turtles. These monies will be used to provide commercial and recreational fishermen with NOAA sea turtle guidance documents on protection, disentanglement and resuscitation, providing free TEDs to skimmer trawl shrimpers to use voluntarily, and an observer program to collect data on the fisheries. To date, DMR has distributed 248 TEDs for skimmer trawls and have been on board Mississippi shrimp vessels for fifteen turtle observer trips.

Staff is currently working on an Endangered Species Act proposal with the Institute for Marine Mammals Studies (IMMS) to further research and protect sea turtles in the Mississippi Sound and adjacent waters.

The Shrimp and Crab Bureau recently developed a Mississippi Seafood Safety Newsletter which will be distributed to all Mississippi commercial fishermen, processors and dealers. The newsletter, which can also be found online at DMR's website, contains a summary of the effort and results of the data that the Office of Marine Fisheries has been gathering in conjunction with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality to ensure that Mississippi seafood is free of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and is safe for consumption.

Shellfish Bureau - The MDMR Shellfish staff is continuing its monitoring efforts by conducting one-minute dredge tows on the oyster reefs. Staff also collects weekly water samples in compliance with the National Shellfish Sanitation Program. In response to the oil spill this program was intensified to enhance existing data. This includes the square meter dive samples and an additional intensive cell reef assessment on the commercial reefs. The staff coordinated with the MDEQ and Marine Patrol to sample the Mississippi Sound and south of the barrier islands collecting water and sediment samples to determine if there was oil contamination.

The R/V Conservationist relayed 600 sacks of oysters to north Telegraph Reef. Also, the Stewardship program held three boat trips on the R/V Conservationist to sample the commercial oyster reefs with the oystermen, processors and dealers. The mission of these trips was to determine the condition and present status of the reefs.

An Oyster Task Force Committee meeting was held on September 16<sup>th</sup>. The group met to discuss the status of the 2010/2011 Oyster Season, opening the season for harvest, dates of possible openings and sack limits.

The Natural Resource Disaster Assessment team has partnered with MDEQ, NOAA, MDMR and BP contractors to use established scientific techniques to assess possible damage to the oyster resource from the oil spill. A seventy-page draft of sampling protocols was developed as a result of tri-weekly teleconferences and daily end-of-the-day meetings with representatives from LA, MS, AL and FL. This plan was used to identify areas of concern from the oil spill and to determine possible long-term damage to the oyster reefs. The various components include larvae, sediment, water quality, disease, condition index and tissue samples. Qualitative, quantitative, and mortality data is also enumerated. Currently these protocols are being utilized and sampling will continue.

Artificial Reef Bureau - In April we deployed an 87 foot shrimp boat "Ole Faithful". This vessel was



donated by Walter Marine to the Mississippi Artificial Reef Program. EDRP funds were used for sinking of this vessel.

The construction of Jail House Key in western Mississippi Sound off Hancock County was completed. During this period of time there were thirty-six deployments totaling 10,650 tons of concrete rubble.

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. A Casting for Conservation kids fishing tournament was held on July 31<sup>st</sup> at Biloxi's Point Cadet. Approximately 120 kids participated in the tournament. Personnel are working closely with the Coastal Conservation Association to schedule future Casting for Conservation kids fishing tournaments. These tournaments utilize EDRP II public outreach funds.

The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) collected 1,049 from April 1, 2010 to September 26, 2010, meeting quotas in Shore Fishing and Private Boat Modes for Waves 2 and 3, and meeting the month's quota for September. The 1x quota was met in Charter/Headboat mode in Waves 2 and 3, but not the 2x. Quota was missed in Charter/Headboat Mode, as well as Private Boat Mode for Wave 4. These quota shortfalls were due to water closures from the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, as well as the Mississippi Charter Fleet taking part in the Vessel of Opportunity Program. New recreational fishing records for April 2010-September of 2010.

Seafood Technology - Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' Seafood Technology Bureau participated in eighteen seafood safety educational and promotional public outreach events in January 2010 – September 2010. Participated in community outreach events sponsored by BP like "BP Community Resources and Claims Fair" in Biloxi, MS and Gulfport, MS.

STB staff attended the Gulf and South Atlantic Shellfish Sanitation Conference in Orange Beach, Alabama from August 15-19, 2010, and the Food Safety Month Seminar Workshop on Food Allergens: "Dealing with Food Allergens: Who's Responsible? What you need to know?" at Jackson, MS on August 31, 2010. Staff attended two different training sessions of the Seafood Assurance program developed to assist the seafood industry in providing additional evidence for the safety of all seafood harvested from the Gulf of Mexico. Over seventy-five members of the Mississippi Seafood industry attended the training.

Re-certifications have been completed for FY 2010-2011 for fifty-five seafood dealers and processors. Twenty-two temporarily closed and one permanently closed after the Deep Water Horizon oil spill. Continuing regulatory inspections is being done to the certified dealers and processors and 122 courtesy inspections of retail establishments in twenty-five counties had been done for the past four months. These courtesy inspections are being done as an extra safeguard and were initiated shortly after the Deep Water Horizon disaster. They include sensory evaluations and a review of HACCP plans to assure steps are in place to look for potentially tainted seafood.

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

Deepwater Horizon Disaster - The Deepwater Horizon disaster has impacted many aspects of Department operations.

Fishery Openings/Closings: Since April 28, the LDWF and LWFC have issued 60 declarations of emergency which closed, opened, re-closed or re-opened portions of LA inside and outside waters to recreational and commercial fishing. The last action taken was dated October 7 which maintained recreational and commercial fishing closures in portions of Barataria Bay and the Mississippi River Delta.

Since agreeing to the FDA/NOAA fisheries reopening protocol in mid-July, the LDWF has submitted 7 requests to reopen portions of state waters to recreational and commercial fishing which have resulted in the complete openings of the Terrebonne and Pontchartrain Basins and significant portions of the Barataria Basin. At one point in late spring as much as 70% of saltwater areas of the state were closed to both recreational and commercial fishing. Currently, 7% of saltwater areas of the state remain closed to commercial fishing and approximately 4% of these areas remain closed to recreational fishing except for recreational angling and charter boat angling. Additionally, the LDWF has requested reopening additional portions of the Barataria Basin and if approved would leave approximately 4% and 0.5% of saltwater areas closed to commercial and recreational fishing other than angling, respectively

Tissue sampling for seafood safety: This assessment has been a two-pronged approach, with private testing labs being used to analyze seafood coastwide on a regular, ongoing basis. In addition, the state has entered into a cooperative agreement with NOAA and the U.S. FDA, who analyze samples taken in areas proposed for re-opening after closures due to oil impacts. Both state and cooperative NOAA / FDA sampling programs evaluate the same set of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH). The state sampling also assesses total aliphatic hydrocarbons. To date, 485 statewide samples have been taken for seafood monitoring, none of which have had any PAH level near or above the established levels of health concern. This included several samples provided by individuals that reported suspected oil in their seafood. In addition, 117 samples have been taken for the NOAA / FDA re-opening protocols. None of those have had any levels of hydrocarbons near or above the levels of health concern.

Data Management: Since the BP oil spill over 1,300 requests for trip ticket landings have been processed for fisherman claims. After BP announced that it would require certified copies of trip ticket from LDWF, the Department started receiving multiple sets of trip tickets from previous years, 2008 and 2009 in particular. All late submissions were thoroughly reviewed and forwarded to LDWF Enforcement for investigation. Several citations have been issued and two arrests for fraud have been made to date. Investigations are still continuing.

Inshore / Nearshore Sampling: In response to the need for information to assess the status of living marine resources in inshore waters, and in the shelf waters off of Louisiana, a long-term sampling program has been designed. The first three years of this program have been funded by BP. Inshore sampling will be a modification of the long-term existing sampling program, with the addition of new stations and incorporating a stratified random sampling design into the existing program. Offshore sampling will consist of a series of trawl transects across Louisiana,

using standard 42' SEAMAP otter trawl, and planning to occupy over 380 stations annually. Sample sites will be run from 5 fathoms to 40 fathoms, at 5 fathom intervals. Sampling will be done monthly, in different areas of the state (west, central, and east), so that all areas of the shelf are sampled quarterly.

Seafood Certification Program: An approved amendment to the grant to develop a seafood certification program for Louisiana, once developed this program will strengthen the industry allowing it to better recover from future disasters. Currently, we are developing and initiating contracts to: 1) develop quality assurance standards for Louisiana shrimp, 2) develop quality assurance research, training programs, testing procedures for quality assurance standards and outreach, 3) establish a trademark for "Certified Wild Louisiana Shrimp", 4) conduct consumer research and creative design services to develop a the logo for the program, and 5) develop a marketing strategy for Louisiana seafood.

Research and Assessment - 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 Spotted seatrout is one of the most popular sport fisheries in Louisiana. A stock assessment of this fishery is currently ongoing. Catch at age tables from fishery-dependent data are being constructed, and population parameters (e.g., growth, mortality) are being estimated at the present time. In response to the DWH MC-252 oil spill, a more comprehensive assessment of oyster mortality is also being conducted using SCUBA and Square meter samples to assess direct mortalities of seed, sack and market-size oysters. Mortality estimates are being estimated state wide and by Basin. To achieve greater confidence in mortality estimates we have increased the number of sample stations and increased the frequency of sampling to weekly site visits.

We have completed a contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to investigate community structure and trends in commercially important species with respect to the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (MRGO). This study used long-term standard sample data collected by LDWF Marine Section from 1988-2009 in the inshore habitats associated with Lake Borgne and Breton Sound. We used data from 16' otter trawls, bag seines, and gill nets along with concurrent water quality data to determine if community structure was associated with changes in salinity, temperature, or turbidity over (1) the entire study period and (2) 5 years prior to and 4 years after Hurricane Katrina. Our multivariate ordination (partial canonical correspondence analysis) of these data revealed that community structure and species diversity has been stable from 1988-2009. However, changes in species composition were more pronounced when comparing the pre-Katrina and post-Katrina periods. Vast amounts of saltmarsh habitat were lost as a result of Katrina's storm surge through the MRGO. Consequently, changes in species relative abundances were detected following Hurricane Katrina. In general, from the 16' trawl data, there was a statistically significant increase in water column species such as Bay anchovy and Striped anchovy with a decrease in demersal species such as Atlantic croaker, flatfishes, and gobies. From gill net data, we found increases in large-bodied omnivorous species such as Gaff-topsail catfish and Atlantic croaker but also a decrease in predators like Spotted seatrout, Silver perch, and Southern kingfish. From seine data, we found significant increases in saltwater-tolerant

species such as Atlantic brief squid, Blackcheek tonguefish, and Gaff-topsail catfish with decreases in freshwater-tolerant species like Gulf menhaden, Atlantic croaker, and Gulf pipefish (a species of conservation concern in Louisiana).

We are also working to develop a predictive model of brown and white shrimp using our fishery-independent data (6' and 16' otter trawls) and environmental data such as precipitation, river discharge, water temperature, salinity and cumulative number of flood tide days. In addition we are incorporating economic factors in the analysis such as average fuel prices. Models developed from this analysis will potentially be used to better assist in managing the shrimp fishery in our state waters.

We recently initiated a study to investigate movement and distribution of the federally endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtle. We will be conducting beach surveys to look for evidence of nesting sea turtles on the Louisiana coast, and we are applying 6 Kiwisat™ satellite tags onto adult individuals. These tags will continuously collect data for approximately 9 months to a year. Data from these tagged turtles will be made available to the public via a website that will be used to track the turtles.

We continue to examine the influence of freshwater diversions of the Mississippi River on shellfish and finfish community structure as well as commercial and recreational fishing effort. In particular, we are focusing on the Barataria Basin which is influenced by water diverted from the Davis Pond structure. We have monthly/semimonthly data from 1998 (4 years prior to the opening) up to the present time.

Marine Lab - Personnel from the Marine Lab were engaged in a Coastal Assessment project through the Environmental Protection Agency. 97 sites across the state were selected; samples were taken and forwarded to the appropriate laboratories for analysis.

SEAMAP cruises were handled by lab personnel to gain information from fishery independent sampling. Collection gear consisted of 42' trawls, bongo and neuston plankton nets, and CTD rosette for data and water collection.

Data Management - LDWF is working with its contractor on conversion from the legacy SAS data management system to a SQL data base with SAS IT analysis capabilities. The contractor has completed the inventory of existing data bases and mapping of data processes. The second phase of the project, development of the relational data base structure, is underway. Data security and access routines are also under development.

Shrimp Fishery - By most estimates, fishing effort in the LA shrimp fishery is about 25-30% of levels reported last year. Reasons are: many fishermen and vessels still remain employed in the vessels of opportunity program, soft markets, low dockside shrimp prices and current fishing closures in adjacent federal waters of the GOMEX. Good news is that only a small percentage of saltwater areas of LA remain closed to commercial fishing. LA trip ticket data is not yet available but below are preliminary shrimp landings data from NMFS for May, June, July and August.

According to Act 606, voting members shall include “three members and three alternate members appointed by the governor each of whom shall possess a commercial fisherman's license with a "certified" endorsement, with four to be selected from a list of six nominees submitted by the Louisiana Shrimp Association and two to be selected from a list of six nominees submitted by the secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Voting members shall also include three members and three alternate members appointed by the governor who are active Louisiana shrimp processors, at least one of whom is selected from a list of three nominees submitted by the American Shrimp Processors Association.

Crab Fishery - Preliminary trip ticket landings data indicate that blue crab landings (millions of pounds) for May, June and July, 2010 are approximately 40%, 52% and 55%, respectively, below levels reported for the same periods last year.

The LA blue crab fishery is seeking MSC certification, has completed a pre-assessment of the fishery and just begun the process of full certification through Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), an independent contractor hired to assist LDWF with the process.

Act 932 of the 2010 Regular Legislative Session now allows any licensed commercial fisherman holding a gear license, including a crab trap license, to possess any finfish caught under that gear license up to the allowable commercial possession limit. Previous limits restricted crabbers to a maximum of 25 finfish per vessel per day.

The LA Crab Task Force has recently moved to support endorsement of a National Seafood Marketing and Promotional Board.

Oysters - The 2010 oyster stock assessment has recently been released. It showed approximately 1.22 million barrels available on public grounds in Louisiana. It also showed that all 5 of the 2009 cultch plants were very successful with estimated oyster resources between 89.9 barrels per acre (cultch plant in CSA II in Black Bay) to 998.2 barrels per acre (CSA V in Sister Lake).

The 2010/2011 oyster season is scheduled to open in Calcasieu Lake on October 15. Lake Mechant in Terrebonne Parish will open next on October 29 with the balance of the traditional public oyster grounds opening on November 15. Biological sampling continues and modifications to this seasonal framework will occur as needed. All 2009 cultch plants indicated above will remain closed to harvest for the 2010/2011 season.

Extensive side-scan sonar evaluation of public oyster seed grounds is on-going east of the Mississippi River in the Black Bay area. The side-scan portion of the project is complete and ground-truthing will continue through the end of October. This project will provide much-needed and valuable reef-mapping information for the public oyster seed grounds in this area.

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

REGULATORY ISSUES - In mid-March, a joint meeting with leadership from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department identified a number of strategically important collaborative opportunities and action items on a broad spectrum of issues including oyster reef management, beneficial use of dredge materials, state water planning, federal fisheries management, invasive aquatic species control, and landscape conservation. All participants concluded the meeting was highly beneficial, so plans were initiated for a future meeting in Louisiana.

Menhaden Total Allowable Catch - As of 4 October 2010, the current estimated pounds of menhaden caught in Texas and landed in Louisiana during the 2010 fishing season totals 20,401,500 pounds. This represents 58.9% of this year's 34.65 million pound Texas Total Allowable Catch.

### COASTAL FISHERIES PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

#### Fish Stocking Efforts

2010 Production Totals to date (1 October 2010)

Red Drum = 16,067,042

Spotted Seatrout = 2,164,155

Flounder = 9,446

PRBMFRS Life History Research - 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 monitoring otolith collections from gill net samples were continued, as was processing and aging of otoliths collected in previous years.

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

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

Temperature tolerance studies of juvenile southern flounder were initiated. An experimental apparatus was designed and tested using juvenile red drum.

PRBMFRS Genetics Research - 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 continued, additional samples from Mexico were analyzed.

A project to track oyster disease severity using QPCR and partially funded by the Texas Water Development Board was continued.

A genetic survey of eastern oysters in Texas bays was initiated.

Artificial Reef Project - The reef program continued processing a number of Rigs-to-Reefs projects. Nine rigs were reefed, generating \$1.5 million in donations. Another 15 active projects are underway and are in various stages of completion. Three additional reef sites were permitted in the General Permit area of the High Island block, making a total of 61 reef sites in Texas (ranging in size from 40ac to over 300ac).

TPWD continues to wait on a US Army Corps of Engineers permit to expand the Vancouver Liberty Ship Reef, off Freeport, from 40 acres to 160 acres. Over 2,000 tons of concrete were reefed at this site in August, with assistance from the Coastal Conservation Association. The CCA had stock-piled numerous concrete culverts for reefing on this site.

TPWD continues to work with the City of Corpus Christi and SEA (Saltwater Fishing Enhancement Association) to locate and permit a 160ac nearshore reef site in Texas state waters off Corpus Christi. A potential site recommendation will be presented to the City Council this fall.

Alamo Concrete, in Harlingen, will move another 1,000+ concrete culverts to our reef material storage site at the Port Mansfield for future reefing at the Port Mansfield nearshore reef site (7nm offshore) by summer 2011. The total culverts at the site will be over 3,000.

No biological monitoring trips were made during this time period after the reef program's dive boat moved its operations to Louisiana to work for BP during the oil cleanup efforts.

A Google Earth interactive map is under construction for the Reef Program's webpage and should be ready for testing by late October. This map, along with plans for a new website, display, brochures, and outreach events are part of a public relations campaign to promote artificial reefs in Texas.

#### Buyback Programs

Inshore Shrimp Buyback Program - Inshore shrimp buyback round # 26 application period closed on 9 April 2010. During this round, 45 individual bids were received and a total of 16 (8 bay and 8 bait) licenses were purchased at a total cost of \$128,200. The average purchase price was \$8,012.

Shrimp - Overall totals since 1996

- 2,061 licenses purchased
- 1,038 bay licenses and 1,023 bait licenses
- Total cost of \$13.6 million
- 2,061 / 3,231 original licenses = 64%

Crab Buyback Program - Crab buyback round #12 application period closed on 9 April 2010

during which 12 applications were received and 5 licenses were accepted at a total cost of \$48,500 and an average cost of \$9,700.

Crab - Overall totals since 2001

- 50 licenses purchased
- Total cost of \$317,749
- Average price over all rounds = \$6,355
- 50 / 287 original licenses = 17% of total

Finfish Buyback Program - Finfish buyback round #15 application period closed on 9 April 2010 during which 18 applications received and 8 licenses were purchased at a total cost of \$69,000 and an average of \$8,625.

Finfish - Overall totals since 2002

- 222 licenses purchased
- Total cost of \$1,263,450
- Average price over all rounds = \$5,691
- 222 / 549 original licenses = 40%

We are currently accepting applications for the first round of the FY2011 for all three fisheries, with an October 29<sup>th</sup> deadline.

Oysters - Coastal Fisheries staff met with staff from the General Land Office, Chambers-Liberty County Navigation District, and a commercial oyster leaseholder who is trying to acquire additional acreage to use for relaying oysters from restricted waters, instead wanting to plant cultch materials on these new leases to capture spat from the natural spawn and allowing the oysters to grow naturally to a marketable size. The GLO has indicated they will review their rules and may be receptive to issuing a surface lease for this activity; however, TPWD would have to issue a Certificate of Location to privatize the oysters growing within the lease.

In April, increasing concentrations of *Dinophysis ovum* and *D. caudata* were detected in the pass at Port Aransas. The Texas Department of State Health Services closely monitored bays all along the Texas coast for the toxic alga, which causes a type of seafood poisoning known as Diarrhetic Shellfish Poisoning or DSP. On 23 April 2010, the TDSHS effectively closed the entire Texas coast for commercial harvest of oysters to levels of *D. caudata* and *D. ovum*. (Bays closed included Galveston, West Galveston, Bastrop, Christmas, East Matagorda, Matagorda, Tres Palacios, Carancahua, Lavaca, Powderhorn Lake, Espiritu Santo, San Antonio, Mesquite, and Copano, St. Charles, Aransas and Corpus Christi bays.) On May 21, 2010, the TDSHS lifted its closure of Galveston Bay waters after oyster and water test results indicated safe oyster harvesting could be resumed, allowing the harvest from private leases to continue.

In mid-September, staff met with a group of commercial oyster fishermen and dealers to discuss four oyster management issues. Representatives of the Texas oyster industry expressed support for two of the items: 1) an oyster shell recovery program and 2) authority for TPWD to be able to close areas quickly (within 48-72 hours) when the availability of market-sized oysters drop below an established threshold. Both of these items will require legislative approval. The two items



that were left on the table were 1) a reduction in the daily sack limit and 2) how to address the latent licenses in the fishery (e.g. buyback, license fee increase, etc.).

OTHERS - In mid-March, Coastal Fishery staff met with GLO staff from the Oil and Gas Leasing Branch to discuss their concerns over TPWD's comment letters regarding oil and gas projects in Texas' inshore waters. The GLO stated that oil and gas companies were complaining that TPWD was preventing them from conducting activities associated with oil and gas operations. It quickly became apparent that the GLO staff from the Oil & Gas Leasing section had not seen one of the Department's comment letters as alternatives are included in the letters and TPWD staff members are willing to work with these companies to minimize their impacts to natural resources.

Hurricane Alex made landfall as a Category 2 hurricane, with maximum sustained winds of 105 mph, on June 30 (Wednesday) around 9:00 PM along the coast of Mexico about 110 miles south of Brownsville.

In early September, Tropical Storm Hermine hit along the Texas/Mexico border and impacted most of Texas with 'her mean' beneficial rains.

Red tide returned to south Texas in late-September. Respiratory distress was reported at South Padre Island. No dead fish have turned up as yet (very low parts per million at this point). Since it showed up early this year, concerns are for a bad year.

### Election of Officers

At the request of Alabama, the Chairman rotation will go to Texas for 2010-2011.

**J. Gill nominated M. Ray for Chairman. C. Perret seconded. Without opposition, M. Ray was named Chairman for 2010-2011 by acclamation.**

**C. Perret nominated C. Blankenship for 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman. Without opposition, C. Blankenship was named 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman.**

**D. Diaz nominated J. Gill 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman. M. Ray seconded. Without opposition, J. Gill was named 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman.**

**L. Simpson presented a token of appreciation to outgoing Chairman V. Vail. V. Vail presented a gift to incoming Chairman M. Ray.**

### Future Meetings

**G. Herring** reported that a site for the Annual Spring meeting to be held March 14-17, 2011 has not been selected. After discussion with Texas Commissioners she will contact hotels in Austin. If Austin is not available, she will contact hotels in Houston, TX.

The Annual meeting will be held October 17-20, 2011. A location in Louisiana has not been determined at this time.

**Publications List**

A new listing of publications was provided for informational purposes.

*There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:20 am.*

**Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel  
Minutes  
Tuesday, October 18, 2010  
Clearwater Beach, FL**

**Horn** called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. with a quorum for both panels. Those in attendance were as follows:

**Members**

Philip Horn, Clark Seafood, Pascagoula, MS (*Recreational Chair*)  
John Rawlings, Colorado River Seafood, Matagorda, TX  
Bob Zales II, Panama City, FL  
Ronnie Luster, Texas CCA, Houston, TX  
Pete Barber, Alabama Seafood Association, Coden, AL  
Bob Fairbank, Mississippi CCA, Biloxi, MS  
Mark Kelley, Alabama CCA, Grand Bay, AL

**Others**

Corky Perret, MDMR, Biloxi, MS  
Virginia Vail, *GSMFC Commissioner*, FFWCC, Tallahassee, FL  
Julie Anderson, LA SeaGrant, Baton Rouge, LA  
Judy Jamison, G&SAFF, Tampa, FL  
Beverly Sauls, FWC, St. Petersburg, FL  
Kevin Anson, AMRD, Gulf Shores, AL  
Andrew Strelcheck, NOAA Fisheries/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL  
Joe Shepard, *GSMFC Commissioner*, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA  
Page Campbell, TPWD, Rockport, TX  
Steve Meyers, NOAA Fisheries, Silver Spring, MD  
Steve Branstetter, NOAA Fisheries, St. Petersburg, FL  
Frank Helies, G&SAFF, Tampa, FL

**Staff**

Larry B. Simpson, Executive Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
David Donaldson, Assistant Director, Ocean Springs, MS  
Steve VanderKooy, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Debbie McIntyre, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS  
Gregg Bray, MRFSS Analyst, Ocean Springs, MS  
Ralph Hode, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Alex Miller, Staff Economist, Ocean Springs, MS  
James Ballard, Program Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS

**Introductions**

**Horn** asked everyone at the table and in the audience to introduce themselves and to review the panel roster for accuracy.

## Adoption of Agenda

*Barber* moved to accept the agenda, *Fairbank* seconded, and the agenda was approved.

## Approval of Minutes (March 9, 2010 – Orange Beach, FL)

The panel reviewed the minutes from the March meeting. *Rawlings* moved to approve the minutes as written, *Zales* seconded, and the motion passed.

## Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program Discussion

**Andrew Strelcheck**, NOAA Fisheries, provided an overview of the Gulf of Mexico grouper/tilefish and red snapper IFQ programs. The red snapper IFQ was implemented January 2007 and the grouper/tilefish IFQ was implemented in January of 2010. The initial shares or allocations were based on logbook landings histories and were intended to reduce overcapitalization and derby fishing conditions in those fisheries. Currently, there are 1,115 IFQ shareholder accounts, 942 vessel accounts, and 109 dealers with IFQ endorsements. Shareholder accounts include gag and other shallow water grouper, red grouper, red snapper, the deep water grouper complex, and tilefish.

When fishing under an IFQ, there are several required steps to be compliant. First, the shareholder must declare the fishing trip prior to leaving port via VMS or phone. Second, the shareholder must give 3-12 hours advanced landing notification to enforcement via VMS, the online system, or by phone. In addition, the shareholder must have sufficient allocation allowed for the vessel at time of notification. This means that the shareholder must 'own' the allocation he is preparing to land or must purchase, lease, or trade from another shareholder the necessary portion of their allocation to be legal. Third, the shareholder must land the catch at a preapproved location and offload at a dealer with an IFQ endorsement. Offloading may only occur between 6 am and 6 pm. Finally, the shareholder and the dealer must complete an online landing transaction to complete the trip and have the allocation removed from the fisherman's shares. The electronic system allows for real time tracking of landings and provides a way for fishermen to sell or lease shares and allocations to other fishermen. The system promotes enforcement and is a single online resource for all of the Gulf's IFQ species.

The program seems to be working well and allows NOAA to make changes to the commercial quotas in real time. They are able to track the landings over the entire year and fishermen are able to fish when convenient or when prices are more favorable and on their own schedule without being forced into the derby conditions of a shortened season. **Strelcheck** reported that there will be a 5-year review of the red snapper IFQ program which should be completed by January 2012. As part of the review, a survey will be sent to shareholders next year to evaluate the program. After the review is completed, the Gulf Council may consider new IFQ programs for king mackerel and the remaining 23 reef fish species.

## National Registry Update

**Gordon Colvin**, NOAA Fisheries, was unable to attend but provided a short PowerPoint on the National Saltwater Angler Registry Program which **Donaldson** reviewed with the group. **Donaldson**

reported that all 5 Gulf States had submitted qualifying proposals in 2009, and were determined to be eligible for designation as exempted states meaning that NOAA is not requiring anglers and for-hire vessels in the 5 Gulf States to register this year. The exemption is in place pending the formalizing of MOAs between NOAA and each of the state agencies which, when executed by both parties, will formalize the Exempted State designation and exempt anglers and for-hire vessels licensed by the state so long as the MOAs remain in place. NMFS is providing funding to the states, through the GSMFC, to implement the MOA requirements and planned improvements to the registry system.

## **MRIP Logbook Pilot Program**

**B. Sauls**, FFWCC, presented on the pilot study of the headboat logbook. In July 2009, charter vessels were selected and notified by certified letter that they had been designated to participate in the mandatory reporting program. In Florida, 357 vessels were notified in the panhandle region and 60 vessels were notified from the Corpus Christi region of Texas. In September, mandatory trip reporting and validation began. Three methods of validation were utilized: 1) effort – random checking if vessels were fishing, 2) dockside - interview every vessel's captain and crew at a randomly selected site, and 3) "at-sea" - vessels randomly selected for at-sea observers. For vessels participating in the program, completed fishing records for charters must be submitted to the FWC or the TPWD weekly, postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each week (Sunday).

**Sauls** reported that so far, there has been some issue with reporting compliance. At this time, there is only 50% compliance by Florida vessels but a nearly 100% compliance from Texas. The FWC is attempting to contact and help those who are not yet reporting and determine what issues may exist. Most of the problems seem to be related to confusion over inactivity reporting (reporting weeks even if there is no fishing) and the deadline for returning forms. Some vessels use the electronic option while others prefer paper reporting which may result in a lag in reporting.

The pilot program will run for one year and then be evaluated to determine whether the program is an effective tool for data collection before considering implementation throughout the Gulf.

## **Emergency Disaster Relief Program Update**

**Hode** gave a brief report on the progress made to date with the EDRP Program funds. To date, the first component of the disaster program (EDRP I) has expended 78.14% of the \$127M. The states have completed 83% of the planned oyster rehabilitation, 66% of the habitat restoration, and 80% of the cooperative research component. The second phase of the program, EDRP II, which was specifically designated for direct economic assistance to fishermen, has expended 80% of the \$67M provided by Congress. The entire program should wrap up in 2011 for EDRP I and 2012 for EDRP II.

## **Oil Disaster and Stock Assessment Enhancement Program**

**Hode** and **Donaldson** presented an overview of the new disaster programs related to the Deepwater Horizon accident. Congress allocated funds in response to the BP Deepwater Horizon and established two recovery programs, the Oil Disaster Recovery Program (ODRP) and the Stock Assessment Enhancement Program (SAE). Both programs are being administered through the GSMFC and unlike

the hurricane disaster program (EDRP), the GSMFC will be directly contracting the components for the Gulf rather than dividing the effort between the states.

**Hode** reported that Congress has provided a total of \$15M with \$5M match to be spent over a 5-year time frame (2011-2015). The ODRP includes the development of a strategic marketing program to counter negative perception of Gulf seafood, the development of programs to expand markets through sustainability and product traceability, and development of a program to provide expanded quality assurance capability for Gulf products. Approximately \$7.7M is dedicated to marketing, \$3.9M for sustainability, and \$1.7M for seafood testing.

**Donaldson** presented the second component of the response, the Stock Assessment Enhancement Program (SAE), which is designed to conduct expanded stock assessment of the fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico. Congress appropriated \$10M to be spent over a 5-year time frame (2011-2015) to support Gulf menhaden port sampling, additional trip ticket program implementation and operations, cooperative for-hire logbook reporting program, and enhancement of fishery-independent sampling with both vessel time and crew.

### **Recreational and Commercial Marketing and Outreach Suggestions**

**VanderKooy** opened the floor for the panel to discuss their needs and to suggest ways to address the marketing aspect of the ODRP program. **Barber** noted that every time we come up with a ‘big picture’ idea, we are restrained by the money. There are billions of dollars coming into the Gulf to build up the coast after the disaster. It is time to look at expanding these assessments. It is time to fund these programs properly since the oil industry is willing to throw money at whatever they consider potential problems. **Barber** related that Alabama was prepared for the oil spill simply because they had baseline data, thanks to funding provided previously by Conoco-Phillips, which put the state in a good position with BP when the initial impacts were determined.

**Zales** noted that tourism has gotten a lot of money to help the industry but the message the Coast had didn’t make it far OFF the Coast. The rest of the country is not on board with the Gulf’s message. We need to push into the rest of the country with the message on behalf of the whole Gulf. We cannot allow the states to “divide and conquer.” We need a unified effort and not try to reinvent the wheel.

**Simpson** reassured the group that the best marketing minds in the region will be working on this, not the fishery people. The states already have expertise in marketing and the GSMFC will be utilizing that knowledge. The ODRP program will bring together a group of Gulf experts to drive the work. The GSMFC will support the program along the way but not get in the way. **Shepard** noted that all of the state agencies agreed that, rather than taking the ODRP and SAE money and dividing it up among the states to where it would not be enough to do anything, the GSMFC would develop a single program to do more for the region as a whole.

**Luster** agreed with **Barber** that we have had a lot of data issues in the past related to the stock assessments put out by NOAA. There is an opportunity for BP to fund good data collection programs to build better assessments now and into the future. The states in the Gulf that should be the recipients of oil and gas royalties should be able to dedicate a long-term funding stream to support fisheries work and

data collection.

**Simpson** pointed out that we do not want BP to design our surveys. We need to design the sampling protocols to make sure they address the issues we need addressed. **Zales** stated that the big unknown with fisheries is what the long-term effect will be, so we need to assume that there may be a couple of year classes for some species that will not exist. For 3 years, people affected in the Gulf can go back to BP for further compensation, but 3 years is not enough time to determine what the impacts to the fish actually are; we need to make BP commit to long-term evaluations. **Simpson** is certain that the GMSFC and the state agencies are following the same course of action that the panel is laying out. We know that this is a long-term problem that will need a long-term commitment on the part of BP.

## **Invasive Species Program Update**

**Ballard** updated the panel on the advance of the invasive lionfish into the northern Gulf of Mexico. The lionfish is a native species in the Indo-Pacific and the most likely vector of the introduction was the aquarium trade. The first recorded introduction was in Biscayne Bay following Hurricane Andrew in 1992 when 6 fish were released from a beachside aquarium. Since that time, these fish have begun to proliferate throughout the Atlantic and Caribbean and, since **Ballard's** last report 6 months ago, they taken a hold of the southern Gulf of Mexico. In the last couple months, several lionfish have been captured along the northern Gulf. The lionfish has no natural predators here and is a voracious predator of native fishes on our reefs. In some places, the numbers of lionfish have exceeded the natural densities in their home range eight-fold. Anyone encountering a lionfish is encouraged to report it and not release it back into the wild. **Ballard** will report again to the panel in the future as this species range continues to expand.

## **IJF Activities**

**VanderKooy** reviewed some of the items currently being worked on in the IJF Program. The panel was updated on the status of the Oyster FMP revision and the Profile for Sand and Silver Seatrout. **VanderKooy** notified the group that they would be sent copies of these documents at some point prior to or around the March meeting next year in hopes of getting the final drafts reviewed by the panel.

## **Election of Chairs**

The panels both agreed that the chairs should remain unchanged. **Horn** will continue as the Commercial Panel chair and **Angelo** will remain as the Recreational Panel chair.

## **Other Business**

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

**OYSTER TECHNICAL TASK FORCE  
MEETING MINTUES  
November 30 – December 2, 2010  
Galveston, Texas**

Moderator, **Steve VanderKooy**, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following members were in attendance:

**Members**

Brian Lezina, LDWF, Lacombe, LA  
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  
Richard Fulford, USM/GCRL, Ocean Springs, MS  
Cherie O'Brien, TPWD, Dickinson, TX

**Staff**

Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, IJF Coordinator, Ocean Springs, MS  
Debbie McIntyre, GSMFC, IJF Staff Assistant, Ocean Springs, MS

**Adoption of Agenda**

**VanderKooy** reviewed the agenda. The agenda was adopted as presented.

**Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the August 2010 meeting and the current TTF roster were reviewed.

*Supan moved to approve the minutes as written, Weeks seconded and the motion passed.*

**Introduction and Housekeeping Items**

**VanderKooy** distributed jump drives containing current drafts of each section to committee members for use during the meeting.

**Draft Review**

During the remainder of the meeting, each section was reviewed (starting at the back of the document) and certain necessary tasks were identified and assigned with specific deadlines.

***ASSIGNMENTS BY TASK FORCE MEMBERS:***



## Fulford:

- Contact Eric **Powell** regarding his review of Section 11 and ask for a 2-week turnaround
- Copy **VanderKooy** and **Arnold** on correspondence with **Powell**
- Review and provide complete references to **VanderKooy**

## Geiger:

- Prepare evolving methods of disease/contaminant detection for Section 6
- Check for additional habitat information and sources for Table 4.1 (section 4)
- Clean up information on role as filter feeder in ecosystem (section 3.3.2.3)
- Check references in Section 3 and provide complete references to **VanderKooy**
- Check the Florida organizations related to the fishery Section 9 and e-mail addresses to **VanderKooy**
- Section 5.2.2.2.3 Reef Fragmentation – need additional info on how does genetics play into fragmentation Connectivity between populations for breeding and gene flow... Too much fragmentation can lead to reduced flow?

## O'Brien:

- Contact **Robinson** for Texas “Cultch Planting” history in Section 16.5
- Edit any Habitat Data Needs under Section 13 and send changes to **VanderKooy**
- Work with **Lezina** on his missing information for the LA habitat table in Section 4
- Send **VanderKooy** Matagorda Bay information (not sure what this is - SJV)

## Herrmann:

- Write a paragraph for AL in Section 16 “Cultch Planting” history and provide to **VanderKooy**
- Review AL Fisheries information and get final draft to **VanderKooy**
- Check with **Blankenship** re: Section 7 “AL Regulatory history”
- Check the Alabama organizations related to the fishery Section 9 and e-mail addresses to **VanderKooy**

## Keithly:

- Locate and copy spreadsheets for Section 9 to **VanderKooy**

## Lezina:

- Write a paragraph for LA regulatory history, Section 7
- Look for something more current than Moncreiff, Section 4
- Check the Louisiana organizations related to the fishery Section 9 and e-mail addresses to **VanderKooy**

## Randall:

- Do a paragraph for MS in Section 16, “Cultch Planting” history/background
- Check the Mississippi organizations related to the fishery Section 9 and e-mail addresses to **VanderKooy**
- Check with Crow regarding history of regulations for Section 7

## **Robinson:**

- Provide information for Section 5 competition/commensalism specifically Schwartz research at A&M
- Check Section 3.3.2.5, “Distribution and Movement of Larvae” - Need literature on distribution by North in Chesapeake and Kim in Mobile Bay
- Check the Texas organizations related to the fishery Section 9 and e-mail addresses to **VanderKooy**
- Review and draft background (paragraph) on HABs and oysters under 5.2.2.1.1 Eutrophication. Provide to **Lezina** and **VanderKooy**
- Need additional text regarding Texas getting depressions forming in reefs by lowering reef height and center of reefs sinking for section 5.2.2.2.1 Mechanical Harvesting. Provide to **Lezina** and **VanderKooy**

## **Supan:**

- Review Section 3
- Check references from Aquaculture and be sure complete.

## **VanderKooy:**

- Let Supan know what information is needed in “References” Section 15 and Supan will have his graduate students do the research and provide Steve with the requested hardcopies when complete
- Make sure temps are consistent, i.e. C vs F., also, Eastern vs eastern

## **Everyone:**

- Review Section 16.1 “Glossary” back at home and delete or add as appropriate – provide by e-mail to **VanderKooy** for immediate inclusion
- Check entire section 15 “References”. Do not put at the end of the drafts. These need to be in the reference section now. Complete citations. Provide paper copies to **VanderKooy** if you have them. **VanderKooy** to provide clean copy of references with notes.
- Review Section 13 ‘Research and Data Needs’ and get changes to **VanderKooy** quickly
- Series of ‘webinars’ to be held after first of year for Section 8 Fisheries, Section 5 Threats, and Section 12 Recommendations.

VanderKooy reminded the group that it had been decided that the FMP data would end as of year 2008 (NOAA’s 2009 landings data will not be final until after draft completion).

*With no further business, **Supan** made the motion to adjourn, the motion was seconded by **Goodrich**, and the group adjourned at 4:00 p.m. Thursday afternoon.*