

GulfFIN
COMMERCIAL DATA COLLECTION STANDARDS



SUMMARY

This document defines commercial data collection and data management standards for the Gulf Fisheries Information Network (GulfFIN). The partners recognize that full implementation of some standards is a long-term goal, and components will be incorporated when funding and staff resources are available.

OVERVIEW

The GulfFIN Data Collection Standards provides information on standards, policies, reporting requirements, quality control and quality assurance, and processes necessary for adjustments and modification. This document should be implemented by all partners as fully as possible to ensure effective and consistent implementation of data collection and data management models.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

The GulfFIN is a state-federal partnership composed of:

Federal Agencies

NOAA Fisheries Service

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Councils and Commissions

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Caribbean Fishery Management Council

Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program

State and Territory Agencies

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission/Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources/Marine Resources Division

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Puerto Rico Department of Environmental and Natural Resources

U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources

BACKGROUND

The Program was established in 1999 through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to address deficiencies in the data that constrained commercial fisheries management along the Gulf coast. These deficiencies included incompatibilities between state and federal data systems, a lack of standardized trip level catch and effort reporting by partners, and a general need for more and better data to support new emerging fisheries management initiatives.

The Program established basic principles to ensure that fisheries-dependent statistics are complete, accurate, consistent, and compatible:

1. Cooperative development and implementation across jurisdictional lines
2. Coastwide data collection standards and a single, integrated data management system
3. Data on commercial fishing activities
4. Modular design for data collection and data management projects

COMMERCIAL

Catch and effort statistics for the commercial fishing sector are collected by most of the partners and only for the fishing activity that occurs in their respective areas of jurisdiction. Due to the different commercial reporting methods, the need for consistency in data collection procedures and coding by the partners is needed for the commercial sector. Full implementation of the trip ticket program is essential to managing data used for fisheries assessment, because it allows linking of all the data back to the trip information.

DATA LOADS

All data collected under the standards will be loaded into the Data Warehouse according to the format and timeline in the standards. Presentation of historical data including the last completed year is available in the Data Warehouse and is updated yearly or as necessary to meet partner data needs. Inclusion in the Data Warehouse allows access to information by fisheries managers, scientists, fishermen, and other interested parties under the confidentiality guidelines. Preliminary data collected for the current year are available to select partner personnel. Commercial data collected by the partners from the trip ticket program from 2 months previously is quality controlled and checked before being sent to GulfFIN by 1st of every month.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Along with data dissemination comes the responsibility of protecting confidentiality. The GulfFIN strives to achieve the right balance between confidential and available data. Confidential data are data that can lead to the identification of the contributing individual or individuals. Federal and state laws prohibit disclosure of confidential data. The GulfFIN uses the "rule of 3" for commercial data. The "rule of 3" requires three separate contributors to fisheries data. This precludes the identity of a single contributor. In some cases, annual summaries by state and species may still be confidential because only one or two dealers process the catch. Alternatively, if there is only one known harvester in a state, the harvester's identity is implicit and those data are confidential.

Each partner is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of its data, as well as deciding who has access to its confidential data. GulfFIN partners grant individuals access to their data housed in the GulfFIN Data Warehouse. At the discretion of the supplying partner, the GulfFIN may revoke access to the user in question. Federal and state laws prohibit disclosure of data that could lead to the identification of the contributing individual or individuals. Penalties vary, but most have a range of fines and/or imprisonment per occurrence. Data at this level are known as confidential data. It is the sole responsibility of the person extracting confidential data from GulfFIN to ensure that confidential data are not disclosed via presentation, publication, or other distribution. Users will be held accountable for any violations by the partner granting access.

Summarized non-confidential data are presented to the public by Year, State, and Species to abide by the rules of confidentiality.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Commercial data collection programs of the GulfFIN require Partners to develop quality control and assurance processes and procedures. These should be applied to any data submitted to the GulfFIN for inclusion in the Data Warehouse.

TRIP TICKET STANDARDS

The partners have produced standards for how commercial data for Gulf coast fisheries should be collected. The standards are the result of discussions and consensus of all partners and represent years of planning, testing, and analysis. The standards for commercial fisheries provide a basis for partners to adjust regulations and implement commercial standards coastwide. These standards for commercial fishery statistics on the Gulf coast include mandatory, trip level reporting of all commercially harvested marine species, with fishermen and/or dealers required to report standardized data elements for each trip by the tenth of the following month.

1. Data Elements

All partners conducting commercial trip ticket programs should provide all required data elements (Tables 1 and 2). Partners may collect additional data elements, or collect data more frequently as their needs dictate. Codes and formats for all variables are listed in Appendix C.

Table 1: TRIP LEVEL INFORMATION COLLECTED BY GULF DEALERS AND/OR COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN

B = Collected from dealer *and* commercial fishermen

D = Collected from dealer

F = Collected from commercial fishermen

* *Required Fields*

** *Future Goal*

DATA ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION / CRITERIA	COLLECTED
Disposition *	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fate of the catch- Examples include releases, discards, bait, industrial use, personal consumption, marine mammal interactions, etc.- Disposition codes should be used to categorize bycatch data- Disposition of releases and discards should be recorded as regulatory versus market and dead versus alive- See Appendix C, Table C-5	B
Dollars	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Dollar value or price for each species that is landed or sold	D
County/Parish and Port Landed *	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Location within a state where the product was landed- See Appendix C, Table C-9	B
State Landed *	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- State where the product was landed or unloaded- See Appendix C, Table C-9	B
Market Size*	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Market categories that affect price- See Appendix C, Table C-6	D
Grade (Landing Condition) *	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Grade categories that affect price- See Appendix C, Table C-7	D
Gear *	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Type(s) of gear used to catch the landed species- See Appendix C, Table C-4	F

Quantity of Gear **	- Amount of gear employed - Quantity of gear should be recorded for each specific gear type - See Table 2	F
Number of Sets **	- Total number of sets or tows of gear during a trip - See Table 2	F
Fishing Time **	- Total amount of time (usually in hours) that the gear is in the water - See Table 2	F
Days/Hours at Sea **	- Time from the start of the trip to the return to the dock	F
Number of Crew **	- Number of crew (including the captain on each trip)	F
Area Fished *	- NOAA Fisheries Service statistical area where fishing occurred - See Appendix D	F
Sub Area Fished*	- Sub area within the area fished - Ranges include unknown, inland, inshore, EEZ, international, etc.	F
Sale Disposition **	- Fate of catch (i.e., where the catch was sold) - Examples include sold to dealer, private/dockside sale, and no-sale/retained	B

Table 2: STANDARD MEASUREMENTS OF GEAR QUANTITY, FISHING TIME, & SETS (*Future Goal*)

TYPE OF GEAR	QUANTITY	FISHING TIME	# SETS
Traps and Pots	# of traps and pots pulled	Total soak time for each pot or trap	# of strings hauled
Trawls	# of trawls towed	Total tow time of each trawls	# of tows
Gill Nets Entanglements	Float line length for string	Total soak time	# of strings/hauls
Longlines	# of gangions/hooks	Total soak time	# of hauls or # of strings hauled
Dredges	# pulled	Total tow time	# of tows
Nets	# of pieces of apparatus	Search time	# of hauls/throws
Rod and Reel	# of lines (# of hooks is secondary)	Total soak time	n/a
Purse Seines	Length of floatline	Total search time	# of sets
Hand Gear	# of lines (# of hooks is secondary)	Total soak time	n/a
Harpoons	# of harpoons	Total search time	# of throws

2. Trip Ticket Data Submission

Partners should use a one-ticket system (one party reports all minimum data elements). The end goal is to have all dealers and/or fisherman report electronically. Until then, partners should provide reporting forms to dealers and/or fishermen for completion after each trip or transaction. Dealers and/or fishermen

landing catches must report to the state of landing. Federally permitted dealers and fishermen must report the state of landing to the NOAA Fisheries Service through the appropriate federal reporting process.

VESL, a web-based application developed by BlueFin, LLC, which meets the commercial standards is available to automate reporting. Dealers and fishermen are required to report all commercial trips regardless of catch. With the exception of Texas, trips that yield no catch are considered trips. Therefore, all data elements for effort must be reported. Mississippi dealers not purchasing directly from harvesters may file a yearly negative report and be exempt from monthly negative reporting. Dealers in the rest of the Gulf states are required to submit monthly negative, or no activity reports in the states where they are licensed. A single negative report may be submitted in advance to cover multiple negative reporting periods. With the exception of Florida, harvesters with no reported commercial landings during the previous license period are required to certify that fact at the time of license renewal.

The GulfFIN urges all partners to investigate and use innovative technologies for commercial data collection in order to reduce burdens on all parties. All partners who collect commercial fisheries data should follow the data submission standards to ensure timely availability to fisheries managers and stock assessment scientists. State dealers and/or fishermen should submit data to the appropriate partner by the tenth of the following month (Florida will be moving to weekly reporting on the same schedule as federal dealers on 7/1/2025). Federal dealers are required to submit both purchase and no activity reports online on a weekly basis, by midnight on the following Tuesday, with the exception of bluefin tuna. Bluefin tuna must be reported by federal dealers within 24 hours upon purchasing the fish from a fishing vessel. In addition, none of the current VESL Trip Ticket reporting platforms are accepted for federal reporting of bluefin tuna; bluefin tuna can be reported to the state through the state reporting programs, but dealers are also required to report bluefin tuna purchases within 24 hours of purchase in the SAFIS eDr program.

3. Validation

Each partner should use an approved process to validate the accuracy of reported data (Table 3). The partners may issue each commercial fisherman and dealer a statement of his/her data of record for review and verification, at least annually. Any discrepancies in landings statements must be reported within 60 days from generation of the statement.

Table 3: PRIORITIZED LIST OF VALIDATION METHODS TO BE USED BY PARTNERS FOR COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

VALIDATION METHOD	DEFINITION / CRITERIA
Fishery-dependent and Fishery-independent Surveys (Presence at the docks or on vessels is the best method of	<i>Port Sampling Programs</i> - Provides liaison between fishermen and fisheries managers
	<i>At-sea Observer Programs</i> - Can be used to validate reported catch and effort

validation and should be given highest priority. A four-way approach using the following methods is preferred)	Law Enforcement Presence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over-flights, boarding and summons reports, vessel tracking system, audits and inspections violations hotlines, customs data consistency in penalties among states - Through direct presence of law enforcement personnel at the docks or through the listed methods
	Distribution of periodic data summaries to fishermen for self-verification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic distribution of standard data summaries to fishermen and dealers provided through the ACCSP data management system
Mandatory Random Fish-House/Fishermen Audits and Inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audits and inspections of records of purchases and sales of fishery products in comparison to those data actually submitted to and received by the reporting agency - Federal and/or state statutes or other regulations should specify record content, submission frequency, and retention period - Random selection of fishermen and/or dealers involved in a fishery, or a stratum of a fishery, should be used to assess compliance rates with reporting rules and accuracy of reported data - Scope of audits may require additional information to verify accuracy of reported data - Auditors must be granted official access to these additional resources as needed - Should only be used as needed
Other Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Random additional logbooks - Independent reports from fishermen and dealers of certain data elements - Fishermen permit qualification - Quota monitoring activities - Any combination of the above - Disaster relief - Should only be used as needed

4. Quality Assurance and Quality Control

All commercial fishery data collection systems should follow relevant procedures. Depending on the format of the reporting system, quality assurance and quality control procedures may vary. As partners receive reports from dealers, the partner should check the reports for legibility, logical values and species/gear combinations, and consistency between dealer and fisherman tickets. Partners should notify fishermen and dealers of reporting errors to reduce the likelihood of future errors or omissions. Should the same individuals or companies continually submit erroneous or incomplete data, partners should respond with additional training or legal action such as fines or revocation of operating licenses. Partners should establish protocols for legal action.

a. *Handwritten Reports and Data Entry*

Data entry protocols should be established to decrease the number of transcription errors from handwritten reports. After the reports are reviewed for clarity, data entry clerks should input the data into the internal database of the partner. To promote accurate data entry, clerks should be properly trained and

qualified. Partners should establish protocols on who conducts spot checks and how often.

b. *Electronic Checks*

After data entry, and before submission of data to the GulfFIN Data Warehouse, data should be checked for accuracy and completeness. Whether data entry is by partner personnel or by the reporting entity, automated computer systems should check for outliers and less obvious errors and flag potentially incorrect information. Some examples of these errors include illogical species ranges, lengths, and weights; uncommon species/gear combinations; incorrect dates, license numbers, and codes; and blank fields which may or may not be valid. It is also possible to incorporate these checks into the data entry system, so potential errors are recognized before reaching the database. Entries that are flagged should always be checked against the original data sheets and possibly with the fisherman or dealer who reported the data before changes are made. If it is necessary to change the database, partners should establish protocols to document how and where the changes occurred.

c. *Data Consistency Checks*

Partners should evaluate the data in the GulfFIN Data Warehouse periodically (at least annually) to check for consistency in records between source partner data sets and the Data Warehouse. Data consistency must be reviewed to ensure that late reports and updated records are reflected in the Data Warehouse. Those changes may be uploaded to the Data Warehouse with a complete reload of that data month of a partner for the given year.

d. *Conversion Factors*

Commercial landings are reported by dealers and fishermen by species, unit of measure, grade, and market designations. However, the standard for distribution of the data is in live/whole pounds. Conversion factors are used to calculate from reported quantity to live/whole pounds. For example, a reported quantity of 10 fish could convert to a landed weight of 60 pounds of gutted fish which would then convert to 80 pounds of live/whole fish. Partners shall apply conversion factors by state. If a state specific conversion is not possible it shall default to a NOAA Fisheries Service conversion. Conversions must have a start date to allow for variations over time. Partners will designate staff to maintain conversion factors by participation in the Commercial ComTech Workgroup.

e. *Quota Monitoring*

Some partners are required by state, GMFMC, or federal fishery management plans to administer in-season quotas. Partners may authorize other partners to act as agents for quota monitoring in order to reduce duplication and increase efficiency. Partners have examined a variety of methods for reducing reporting intervals for quota managed species. As cost-effective systems for more frequent reporting become available, the partners are adapting to accept more frequent data submissions. Many partners are using electronic reporting systems such as BlueFin's web-based VESL application.

AQUACULTURE

As indicated in the recent survey responses for the FIS project, Improving and Expanding Nationwide Marine Aquaculture Data in the Fishery Information Networks: Phase 1 – Assess and Benchmark State-Level Data Reporting Processes, all Gulf

states have dealer and harvester reporting requirements. Harvester reporting requirements mostly applied to shellfish (oysters mainly) while the dealer reporting covered more species. All gulf states require harvesters to report species landed (Texas technically does not but harvester reporting is oyster only), volume/quantity, and permit number. All gulf states except for Florida also require harvest date and value/price to be reported as well by harvesters. Dealer reporting of aquaculture by all Gulf states requires species, volume/quantity, and permit number. All Gulf states except for Florida also require harvest date, value/price, harvest location, and grade/size.

APPENDIX C REFERENCE CODES and FORMATS

List of Tables:

Table C-1:	STANDARD CODE FORMATS FOR REQUIRED INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED ON A TRIP TICKET BY GULF COAST DEALERS AND FISHERMEN
Table C-1A:	FEDERAL STANDARD CODE FORMATS FOR REQUIRED INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED ON A TRIP TICKET BY FEDERAL DEALERS AND FEDERAL FISHERMEN
Table C-2:	STANDARD GEAR CODES
Table C-3:	STANDARD GRADE CODES (LANDING CONDITION)
Table C-4:	STANDARD DISPOSITION CODES
Table C-5:	STANDARD MARKET CODES (BASED ON MARKET SIZE)
Table C-6:	STANDARD CODES AND FORMATS FOR UNITS OF MEASUREMENT, GENERAL FISHING AREA
Table C-7:	STANDARD AREA AND SUB AREA CODES
Table C-8:	STANDARD CODES FOR STATE, COUNTY AND PORT OF LANDING
Table C-9:	SPECIES CODE (ITIS CODES)

Table C-1: STANDARD CODE FORMATS FOR REQUIRED INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED ON A TRIP TICKET BY STATE AND FEDERAL GULF COAST DEALERS AND FISHERMEN

*** Future Goal*

**** Federal Required Fields*

DATA ELEMENT	FORMAT	DATA ELEMENT	FORMAT
Form Type/Version Number	12-digit alphanumeric	State Landed	2 character postal alpha abbreviation. (See Table B-9)
Reporting Form Series Number	12-digit alphanumeric	Dealer Identification	2-digit character postal alpha abbreviation plus 8 character code (See Table B-3)
Trip Start Date	MM/DD/YYYY Date Format 8 character	Unloading Date	8 character date format: MM/DD/YYYY
Vessel Identifier	11-digit character	Market Size	2-digit alpha-numeric code (See Table B-6)
Individual Identifier	11-digit character	Grade (Landing condition)	2-digit numeric code (See Table B-7)
Trip Number	2-digit numeric	Gear(s)	3-digit numeric code (See Table B-4)
Species	ITIS 11-digit character code (See Table B-8)	**Quantity of Gear	6-digit numeric (See Table 2)
Quantity (Live, Landed, Reported Quantity)	8-digit numeric plus two decimal points	**Days/Hours At-sea	DD/HH
Units of Measurement	2-digit character code (See Table B-3)	**Number of Crew (Including captain)	3-digit numeric
Disposition of Catch	3-digit character code (See Table B-5)	**Fishing time	Hours: DD/HH/MM
Ex-vessel Value or Price	5-digit numeric plus three decimal points	Area Fished	3-digit numeric plus 2 decimal places (See Table B-3)
County/Parish or Port Landed	Federal Information Processing Standards 3-digit character: county 5-digit character: port (See Table B-9)	**Number of Sets	3-digit numeric
***Federal Dealer/Fishermen Required Fields	Federal dealers and Federal Fishermen (see TABLE C-1A)		

Table C-1A: ADDITIONAL STANDARD CODE FORMATS FOR REQUIRED INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED ON A TRIP TICKET BY FEDERAL DEALERS AND FEDERAL FISHERMEN

DATA ELEMENT	FORMAT	DATA ELEMENT	FORMAT
How Fins Attached	1 Char Y = Naturally, N = Not Naturally, U = Unknown	Sale Price	8 digit (2 decimals) Total sales or No Sale
Why Fins Not Attached	150 Char Free form entry by users for explanation of why fins not naturally attached on offload	Late Report Explanation	150 Char Explanation for late report
HMS Catch Area	50 Char Area fish were caught based on standardized ICCAT Map	Modified Data Explanation	150 Char Explanation for modified data
Port	6 digit NMFS Port Code	Date Updated	Date Date original record was updated and re-submitted
FV Name	Fishing Vessel name	UTC Date Submitted	5 Char UTC or LOCAL
VTR	16 Char Unique number associated with a vessel's required logbook.	UTC Date Updated	5 Char UTC or Local
Why No VTR	150 Char Explanation of why unique number associated with a vessel's logbook is not included	Date Landed	Date mm/dd/yyyy Date vessel arrived at dock
Observer Log ID	25 Char SE Observer Log ID	Explanation	150 Char Free form entry by users for negative report explanation
Email Address	30 Char Valid email address of dealer	Purchase Date	Date Date catch was purchased

Table C-2: GULFFIN STANDARD GEAR CODES

See the website: <https://data.gsmfc.org/fin-rc.php> (Gears tab)

Table C-3: GULFFIN STANDARD GRADE CODES

See the website: <https://data.gsmfc.org/fin-rc.php> (Grades tab)

Table C-4: GULFFIN STANDARD DISPOSITION CODES

See the website: <https://data.gsmfc.org/fin-rc.php> (Dispositions tab)

Table C-5: GULFFIN STANDARD MARKET CODES

See the website: <https://data.gsmfc.org/fin-rc.php> (Markets tab)

Table C-6: GULFFIN STANDARD UNIT OF MEASURE CODES

See the website: <https://data.gsmfc.org/fin-rc.php> (Units of Measure tab)

Table C-7: GULFFIN STANDARD PORT AND COUNTY CODES

See the website: <https://data.gsmfc.org/fin-pcplus.php>

Table C-8: GULFFIN STANDARD SPECIES CODES (Use itis codes)

See the website: <https://itis.gov>