



NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
SOUTHEAST REGION

COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM



2008 ANNUAL REPORT

Cooperative Research Program

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

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Mona Island, Puerto Rico

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PREFACE

Cooperative research programs allow scientists and fishermen to bring valuable tools and experience to the objectives of a research project. Scientists realize that fishermen have knowledge, skills, and vessels that would not otherwise be available for research. Participating fishermen recognize that the information collected will not be used in management decisions unless it is scientifically credible. The interaction between fishermen and scientists not only improves the design and implementation of research studies, but also improves the knowledge and acceptance of scientific results that are produced by such studies. Working together, fishermen and scientists can improve our understanding of the complex interactions between fishery resources and fishing practices.

The intent of the cooperative research program in the Southeast Region is to utilize the collective experience of fishermen and scientists to provide the best advice to fishery managers based on fishing experience and sound scientific research procedures. The Cooperative Research Program (CRP) focuses upon critical management needs that have been identified by managers and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) 2001 Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research.¹ Goals one, two, and five are particularly important. As with the Marine Fisheries Initiative (MARFIN), CRP is coordinated with other programs to provide regional assessments of fishery resources. The cooperative research program provides the necessary programmatic integration through cooperative planning, accomplishment of program activities, and sharing of results.

The cooperative research program was created to utilize the total spectrum of knowledge concerning the marine fishery resources of the Southeast Region. The results of this program will improve management and the acceptance of management decisions in the southeast. Results will be disseminated and made available to managers in a timely manner. The initial focus of the program included research on life history studies of important commercial and recreational species, release mortality of red drum as influenced by hook type, characterization of the commercial catch of snapper-grouper in the south Atlantic, description and characterization of the pelagic longline fishery for highly migratory species, and fishers views in the Caribbean concerning vessel capacity and effort reduction programs. Subsequently, research directions have expanded to include bycatch reduction methodology for sea turtles and other species, development of electronic logbook systems, distributional patterns and life history characteristics of various billfish species, and cooperative shark research.

¹NMFS Strategic Research Goals:

1. Provide scientifically sound information and data to support fishery conservation and management.
2. Through conservation engineering research contribute to efforts to reduce bycatch and adverse effects on EFH, promote efficient harvest of target species, and to improve data from fishery surveys.
3. Through economic and ecological research on marine communities and ecosystems, provide scientific data and information to increase long-term economic and social benefits to the Nation from living marine resources.
4. Improve the fishery information system.
5. Improve the effectiveness of external partnerships with fishers, managers, scientists, conservationists, and other interested groups.

HISTORY OF THE COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM (CRP)

The CRP is a competitive Federal assistance program that funds projects seeking to increase and improve the working relationship between researchers from NMFS, state fishery agencies, universities, and fishermen. Congress initiated the cooperative research funding to assist the NMFS to improve the confidence that both commercial and recreational fishermen have in the data and analyses performed in support of fisheries management. The authorizing statute for this program is 15 U.S.C. 713c-3(d). Each year a solicitation for proposals is published in the Federal Register (see Appendix 3).

The CRP's principal goal is to provide a means of involving commercial and recreational fishermen in the collection of fundamental fisheries information to support the development and evaluation of management and regulatory options. The program is sponsored by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, assisted by the State/Federal Liaison Branch located in the Southeast Regional Office. Appendix 1 lists the State/Federal Liaison Branch personnel.

Funding for the program began in the northeast and was extended to the southeast in FY 2001 with an initial funding level of \$2.5 million for the southeastern component of the CRP. Because of the long history of cooperative research efforts between the Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc. (Foundation) and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), the SEFSC funded a project to the Foundation to hold a cooperative research constituency workshop in Tampa, Florida, on April 17-18, 2002. The purpose of the workshop was to establish objectives and research priorities for the southeastern CRP. The results of that meeting were presented in the 2003 CRP Annual Report.

As a result of the 2002 workshop, the initial focus of work was as follows:

1. Cooperative research on development of gear modifications and fishing practices to reduce turtle takes in U.S. Atlantic pelagic longline fisheries.
2. Cooperative research with the Foundation on Bycatch Reduction Device (BRD) effectiveness and on the effectiveness of high opening Turtle Excluder Devices.
3. Cooperative research to obtain reef fish biological samples from the Gulf of Mexico.
4. Cooperative research with the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP).
5. Cooperative statistics data collection.
6. Cooperative research on age structure of adult red drum in the Gulf of Mexico.
7. Cooperative shark research.
8. Cooperative research on essential habitat requirements for blue and white marlin and associated species.
9. Cooperative research on characterization of shrimp and reef fishery bycatch.
10. Cooperative research to collect biological specimens from sea bass in the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's region of concern.
11. Cooperative archival tagging of bluefin tuna.

FISCAL YEAR 2008 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc. proposed a 2008 Cooperative Research Program award to conduct an industry/NMFS workshop to cooperatively discuss the current state of knowledge regarding bycatch reduction device (BRD) research, technology, and regulations. During the competitive review process, the proposal was found to meet a crucial need for guidance to the commercial shrimp industry with regard to appropriate development of new BRDs. Following NOAA approval under award NA08NMF4540398, the workshop was successfully held on November 11-13, 2008. The workshop participants included key representatives from the commercial fishing industry, universities, and state/federal management agencies. Information provided at the workshop, and in the award's final report, are now assisting the shrimp industry with the transition to development and utilization of new BRD designs and compliance with the new, more effective regulations.

Appendix 1. NMFS Southeast Region State/Federal Liaison Branch Staff

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State/Federal Liaison Branch
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St. Petersburg, Florida 33701
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Appendix 2a. Active CRP Project Summaries
(Describes the active CRP projects that have been funded but not yet completed)

NA06NMF4540060

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: A Cooperative Research Approach to Estimating Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico King Mackerel Stock Mixing and Populations Dynamics Parameters

Project Start Date: June 1, 2006

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

University of West Florida
11000 University Parkway
Pensacola, FL 32514-5750
(850) 857-6123

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. Will Patterson has 12 years of experience on research on age and growth, population dynamics, fisheries ecology, and otolith microchemistry.

Project Goals and Objectives: The overall goal of this project is to address data needs essential for effective management of Gulf and Atlantic king mackerel migratory groups. This will be accomplished through cooperative research between the researcher, commercial fisherman, charter boat captains, and the NMFS Panama City Laboratory.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 1(f).

Summary of Work: The research will: 1) estimate the temporal and spatial variability in stock mixing with natural tags derived from otolith shape and chemistry analyses, 2) estimate stock- and sex-specific von Bertalanffy growth parameters, and 3) provide gonad samples for ongoing research aimed at updating and more precisely estimating stock-specific age at maturity, batch fecundity, and annual fecundity functions. Results of this work will include mixing and biological parameter estimates critical to king mackerel management.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$304,036
Non-Federal	\$11,084
Total	\$315,120

NA06NMF4540061

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Populations structure and genetic demography of yellowtail, mutton, and lane snappers in the U.S. Caribbean fishery

Project Start Date: September 1, 2006

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Texas A&M Research Foundation
3578 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-3578
(979) 847-8778

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. John R. Gold has over 30 years experience in fish genetics. Dr. Eric Salliant has over 10 years of experience in molecular populations genetics of marine fishes.

Project Goals and Objectives:

The primary objectives are: (i) to acquire molecular-genetic data from nuclear-encoded loci and mitochondrial DNA from three species of shallow-water snappers (yellowtail snapper; mutton snapper; and lane snapper) sampled from the U.S. Caribbean; and (ii) to develop for each species a rigorous, genetics-based model of populations structure and demography that includes genetic variation and distinctiveness, degrees(s) of population growth or decline, parameters and levels of migration (mixing), and (genetic) effective size. The overall objective is to provide critical data that can be applied (and updated periodically) to assessment and allocation of shallow-water snapper resources in waters of the U.S Caribbean.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 1(f), (2,a), (3,a) and Priority C (Caribbean fisheries) (2).

Summary of Work: The researchers will (i) Acquire tissues from each snapper species at four localities in the U.S. Caribbean, one locality in the British Virgin Islands, and one locality in the Florida Keys; (ii) acquire genotypes at 12-15 microsatellites from 1,350 individuals and sequences of mitochondrial DNA from 450 individuals; (iii) execute data analysis to answer four questions: (a) are there multiple 'genetic' stocks of each species in U.S. Caribbean waters, and if so, what are their geographic boundaries? (b) What are the patterns and rates of migration between or among offshore sampling localities in each of the three species? (c) What are the demographic dynamics (population growth/decline and rate(s) of growth/decline) in any of the species at any of the sampling localities? And (d) What are the effective population sizes of each species at each sampling locality and do effective sizes differ among localities?

NA06NMF4540061

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY (CONT.)

Project Funding:

Federal	\$269,577
Non-Federal	\$45,113
Total	\$314,690

NA07NMF4540075

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Characterization of the Catch by Swordfish Buoy Gear in Southeast Florida

Project Start Date: 9/1/2007

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Dr. David W. Kerstetter
Oceanographic Center
Nova Southeastern University
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314
Phone: (954) 262-3664

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. David Kerstetter, with seven years conducting fisheries research at sea aboard commercial pelagic longline vessels.

Project Goal and Objectives: To characterize the swordfish buoy gear fishery in the Florida Straits.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to Priority B (Bycatch), 2 (a) and 2(b).

Summary of Work: This award will study the catch and bycatch of swordfish buoy gear (SBG) during 56 nights of fishing. The research will use electronic monitoring equipment to determine the effective fishing depths and times of operation for the SBG gear.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$147,284
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$147,284

NA07NMF4540076

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Seasonal Movement and Mixing Rates of Greater Amberjack in the Gulf of Mexico and Assessment of Exchange with the South Atlantic Spawning Stock

Project Start Date: August 1, 2007

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Dr. Debra Murie
Department of Fisheries & Aquatic Sciences
University of Florida
7922 NW 71st Street
Gainesville, FL 32653
(352) 392-9617

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. Debra Murie, with over 20 years of fisheries-related experience, including collaboration on stock assessments, estimating population abundance using stratified population analyses based on mark recapture, and general fisheries ecology.

Project Goal and Objectives:

The goal is to examine the seasonal pattern and rates of movement of greater amberjack in the Gulf of Mexico and to determine the potential mixing rate of the Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack stock with the South Atlantic greater amberjack stock, especially in known spawning areas off southern Florida.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish).

Summary of Work:

This work will: 1) capture and externally tag greater amberjack with anchor tags, determine sexual status, and collect fin rays for aging and tissue samples for genomic fingerprinting (using Amplified Fragment Length Polymorphisms or AFLPs) in four geographic regions; 2) Determine presence and timing of any seasonal dispersal or migration patterns of Gulf greater amberjack through analysis of tag recaptures; 3) through tag recaptures, estimate potential mixing rate of Gulf greater amberjack with greater amberjack from known spring spawning areas of the South Atlantic stock off south Florida; 4) determine the location(s) of potential spawning of greater amberjack in the Gulf by tagging large, sexually mature fish with pop-off archival transmitting tags during the late fall in the northern Gulf of Mexico and set the tags to pop-off during the peak of the presumed spawning period (late April/May). Through geolocations up-loaded from these tags, determine whether greater amberjack in the northern Gulf migrate south to spawn or remain in the northern Gulf during the spawning season. Along with recaptures of external anchor tags during the spawning season (with location information supplied), this would determine the presence and potential location of spawning aggregations of Gulf greater amberjack; 5) develop 300-500 nuclear amplified fragment length polymorphisms and mitochondrial DNA sequence markers of greater amberjack; 6) integrate the results of the

NA07NMF4540076

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY (CONT.)

tagging portion of the study (Objectives 1-4) with the genomic picture of Gulf stock structure (Objective 5) to estimate movement and mixing rates of Gulf greater amberjack. Assess whether the tagging and genetic results are complementary and result in the same interpretation of what constitutes the Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack stock; and 7) collaborate with the NMFS partner (Panama City, Florida) and stock assessment scientists at the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center to provide tagging and genetic analyses.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$321,940
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$321,940

NA07NMF4540077

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: A Program to Enhance Industry Evaluations of Complex Bycatch Reduction Devices within the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Trawl Fishery

Project Start Date: August 1, 2007

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc.

5401 W. Kennedy Blvd., Suite 740

Tampa, FL 33609

(813) 286-8390

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Ms. Judy Jamison, with over 24 years of experience.

Project Goal and Objectives: To reduce the fishing mortality of juvenile red snapper being incidentally harvested during shrimp trawl operations, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has implemented regulations specifying the use of BRDs. However, effective implementation of new BRD requirements requires outreach in the shrimp trawling industry over a large geographical range. Through this project, a more efficient conversion to improved BRDs can be accomplished through outreach within the fishing industry.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 4.

Summary of Work: This research will: 1) embolden fishermen to utilize more complex and sophisticated BRDs, hence creating a paradigm shift in gear utilization; 2) obtain informal, objective industry evaluations of new BRD designs over a broad spectrum of areas and species fished and provide input back to NMFS; 3) create a level of industry trust regarding new BRDs, thus providing for a more effective and efficient transition to potentially new BRD mandates; and 4) begin training selected net shops and related personnel in the construction of new BRDs.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$177,207
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$\$177,207

NA07NMF4540078

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Reducing discard mortality in red snapper recreational fisheries using descender hooks and rapid recompression

Project Start Date: August 1, 2007

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Texas Tech University
Department of Biology
Lubbock, TX 79409-313
(806) 742-1999

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. Sandra Diamond, with over 20 years of experience in marine fisheries, including seven years of experience working for the California Department of Fish and Game, and eight years as a faculty member at Texas Tech University.

Project Goal and Objectives:

The goals of this project are to: 1) reduce mortality of undersized red snapper discarded regulations in the recreational fisheries; 2) quantify mortality due to predation of discarded red snapper, and 3) determine whether rapid recompression can reduce the mortality of discarded red snapper.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to A (Commercial Finfish) 1.

Summary of Work:

This work will: 1) test a fishhook (the Shelton Fish Descender or SFD hook) that will reduce discard mortality by allowing discarded red snapper to be released at depth instead of at the surface; 2) compare discard mortality of fish released at the surface with discard mortality of fish that are released at depth; 3) quantify predation rates of red snapper released at the surface compared to fish released at depth; 4) evaluate the effects of rapid recompression on red snapper mortality, physiology, and behavior; 5) determine whether the Sheldon Fish Descender hooks are effective during normal operating procedures on headboats; and 6) educate fishermen on the use of SFD hooks.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$262,369
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$262,369

NA07NMF4540079

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Batch fecundity and spawning frequency as a function of size, age, and season for black sea bass and red porgy in the U.S. South Atlantic

Project Start Date: August 1, 2007

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Department of Biology and Marine Biology
University of North Carolina at Wilmington
601 South College Rd.
Wilmington, NC 28403-5915
(910) 962-7796

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. Fredrick Scharf, with over 14 years of fisheries experience.

Project Goal and Objectives:

The project goal is to utilize the expertise and vessels of experienced commercial fishermen to collect black sea bass and red porgy throughout their winter/spring spawning seasons for the purposes of estimating batch fecundity and spawning frequency. In addition, a range of sizes/ages of each species needs to be collected throughout the spawning season to accurately evaluate the effects of size, age, and time of year on batch size and frequency. The data collected as part of this proposed research will allow assessment biologists to incorporate accurate information on female reproductive output into population models to more thoroughly evaluate current metrics used as management reference points and explore the potential for current and future harvest practices to influence the population dynamics of two protogynous members of the snapper-grouper complex.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish).1.f.

Summary of Work:

The researchers will collect black sea bass in traps, and collect red porgy using bandit reels, and hook-and-line. Experienced commercial fishermen will harvest these two protogynous species during the winter/spring spawning seasons. This research will evaluate the effects of size, age, and time of year on batch size and frequency, and will provide information on female reproductive output data for incorporation into the population models for black sea bass and red porgy.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$222,716
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$222,716

NA07NMF4540080

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: A pilot program to assess ParFish, an alternative stock assessment program approach using limited data sources, for commercial fisheries of Puerto Rico

Project Start Date: August 1, 2007

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

MRAG Americas, Inc.
10051 5th St. N, Suite 105
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
(727) 563-9070

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. Robert J. Trumble has over 35 years of experience in marine fishery science and management. He has extensive experience working with governmental agencies, fisheries groups, and national and international advisory groups.

Project Goal and Objectives:

To provide data for the assessment models being prepared for the deepwater snapper resource, so as to provide recommendations for data collection and fishery management measures.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 2.

Summary of Work:

The researchers will obtain interviews with deepwater snapper fishermen to provide data for the assessment models being prepared for those species. The researchers then will develop recommendations for data collection to reduce uncertainty of assessment results, and develop recommendations for fishery management.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$101,365
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$101,365

NA07NMF4540084

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Quantity and quality of trap-caught black seabass (*Centropristis striata*) off the central North Carolina coast, including elemental analyses of otoliths to determine individual migration histories

Project Start Date: August 1, 2007

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Anthony Austin
276 Goose Creek Road
Hubert, NC 28539
(910) 326-1293

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. Anthony Austin, with over 35 years of fulltime commercial fishing experience.

Project Goal and Objectives:

To determine the numbers and quality (catch and disposition) of trapped black sea bass relative to the amount of soak time and to surface conditions.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 1.

Summary of Work:

The researcher will use black sea bass traps off North Carolina to determine the cumulative catch as a function of soak time, and characterize the size and species composition of bycatch in the traps. Otolith elemental analyses on the black sea bass caught in the traps will study the morphological differences between black sea bass, and describe the seasonal and annual migration of individual adults.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$55,300
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$55,300

NA07NMF4540085

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Behavior, Habitat, and Abundance of the Goliath Grouper (*Epinephelum itajara*) in the Central Eastern Gulf of Mexico

Project Start Date: August 1, 2007

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

100 Eighth Avenue SE

St. Petersburg, FL 33701

(727) 896-8626

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Angela Collins, with over 4 years of marine fisheries research experience.

Project Goals and Objectives:

This project will: 1) characterize size structure, spawning and non-spawning behaviors, and spatial and temporal variations in habitat associations; 2) determine relative abundances of goliath grouper based on habitat type, depth and season in the central eastern Gulf of Mexico; 3) quantify site fidelity for goliath grouper and characterize whether this changes with fish size, depth, season or habitat type; and 4) synthesize fisheries information and life history parameters for Florida's goliath grouper population with other regions in the western Atlantic, Caribbean Sea, and Gulf of Mexico.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority C (Essential Fish Habitat).4.c.

Summary of Work:

The researchers will conduct extensive in situ observations of goliath grouper. Tags will be attached to the observed goliath grouper, using a modified spear gun. Otoliths and gonad samples will be collected when available during field observations, as well as from fish kills reported to the recipient.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$206,096
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$206,096

NA08NMF4540389

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Investigation of Essential Fish Habitat of Adult Dusky (*Carcharhinus obscurus*) and silky (*Carcharhinus falciformis*) sharks in the northern Gulf of Mexico using Pop-up Satellite Archival Tag Technology

Project Start Date: July 1, 2008

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

The University of Southern Mississippi
703 East Beach Drive
Ocean Springs, MS 39564

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Jim Franks, with over 42 years of marine fisheries research experience. Eric Hoff Mayer, with over 9 years of marine fisheries research experience.

Project Goals and Objectives:

GOAL: Develop scientific data critical to the identification of essential fish habitat (EFH) of adult dusky and silky sharks in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

OBJECTIVE: To determine habitat use, seasonal movement patterns, and environmental preferences of adult dusky and silky sharks in the northern Gulf of Mexico using pop-up satellite archival tag (PSAT) technology.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 1

Summary of Work:

This study will further advance the cooperative working relationship developed between GCRL researchers and NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula Laboratory shark biologists Mark Grace and Dr. William Driggers. This study will enable GCRL and NMFS biologists to work cooperatively with northern Gulf of Mexico charter fishing captains and the charter fishing industry. This is particularly beneficial to the charter vessel operators in the post-Hurricane Katrina era. This study will advance existing working relationships between the researchers and the recreational fishing community by working cooperatively, to collect valuable, fundamental data and information useful for the development and evaluation of management and regulatory options for dusky and silky sharks in the region.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$148,040
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$148,040

NA08NMF4540392

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Bottom longline survey in the northeastern Gulf of Mexico for abundance and collection of biological data from tilefishes and deepwater groupers

Project Start Date: July 1, 2008

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Captain Curtis Summers
450 Adkinson Road
Newton, AL 36352

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Captain Curtis Summers, with over 40 years experience.

Project Goals and Objectives:

- (1) Projects are needed to collect detailed information on the composition and disposition of bycatch and discards.
- (2) Investigations are needed to determine more efficient methods to record catches accurately on a real-time basis during fishing operations (e.g. electronic logbooks).
- (3) Projects are needed to develop methods to increase the amount of at-sea observations utilizing imaging systems.
- (4) Projects are needed to utilize fully scientific observers on-board vessels as a means of collecting detailed catch, effort and disposition data.
- (5) Data collection projects are needed to improve life history information on commercial finfish species. Improved information about the age-structure of the catch, based on otolith or other hard-part aging techniques. Improve information on the reproductive characteristics of the stock will provide information to refine estimates of long-term biological productivity of the stock.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 1.

Summary of Work:

This project will conduct a randomized and stratified by depth bottom longline survey to estimate abundances of tilefish and deepwater grouper and conduct site-specific monthly sampling to characterize the spawning season of tilefish and other deepwater groupers. We will classify the composition and status of the catch and use advanced digital sampling devices to describe and record site-specific capture information. Commercial fishing vessel operations will be observed at-sea to enhance the digital reporting of data and biological sampling efforts. Otoliths and gonads will be collected from all species caught. Our results will include complete age, growth and reproductive analysis for all tilefish and deepwater grouper collected for use in future assessments and management purposes.

NA08NMF4540392

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY (CONT.)

Project Funding:

Federal	\$114,058
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$114,058

NA08NMF4540398

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Industry/NMFS Bycatch Reduction Device Workshop

Project Start Date: July 1, 2008

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc.

5401 W. Kennedy Blvd., Suite 740

Tampa, FL 33609

(813) 286-8390

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Ms. Judy Jamison, with over 24 years of experience.

Project Goals and Objectives:

An industry/NMFS workshop will be convened to cooperatively discuss the current state of knowledge regarding BRD research, technology, and regulations in a roundtable format. Specific objectives/topics to be addressed at this workshop are:

Results of in situ field tests of currently certified and promising BRDs;
Current studies investigating finfish reduction from shrimp trawl nets;
BRD regulatory changes and the impact of these regulations on the shrimp fishery; and
Industry priorities for reducing finfish bycatch within the shrimp fishery.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 1.

Summary of Work:

Under this award, the researchers will convene an industry/NMFS/Sea Grant gear workshop. The workshop will cover the current state of knowledge regarding bycatch reduction device (BRD) research, technology, and regulations in a roundtable format. The project will facilitate more effective BRD use through industry and gear expert participation in an interactive workshop.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$80,000
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$80,000

NA08NMF4540399

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Continuation of Catch Characterization and Discards within the Snapper Grouper Vertical Hook-and-Line Fishery of the South Atlantic United States

Project Start Date: July 1, 2008

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc.

5401 W. Kennedy Blvd., Suite 740

Tampa, FL 33609

(813) 286-8390

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Ms. Judy Jamison, with over 24 years of experience.

Project Goals and Objectives:

The purpose of this project is to:

1. Continue the observer program within the snapper-grouper vertical hook-and-line fishery of the South Atlantic United States;
2. Utilize previously trained or contract and train fishery observers to collect data to quantify total catch, effort, and discards (including fate) within the fishery; and
3. With assistance of the South Atlantic Sustainable Fisheries Association, Inc., continue to actively solicit the participation of cooperating vessels to ensure a sufficient sample of vessels is included in the study, and disseminate the results of data collected subsequent to the program completion.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 1.

Summary of Work:

Under the award, the researchers will quantify effort, total catch, and discard mortality within the snapper-grouper vertical hook-and-line fishery of the South Atlantic. This project will continue the recipient's observer program within the snapper-grouper vertical hook-and-line fishery of the South Atlantic. The observers will collect data aboard participating commercial vessels to quantify total catch, effort, and discards within that important fishery.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$240,242
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$240,242

NA08NMF4540400

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Population structure and genetic demography of red hind and coney in the U.S. Caribbean and development of genetic markers for yellowfin and tiger groupers.

Project Start Date: July 1, 2008

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Texas A&M Research Foundation
3578 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-3578
(979) 847-8778

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. John R. Gold has over 30 years experience in fish genetics.

Project Goals and Objectives:

Acquire molecular-genetic data from nuclear-encoded loci (microsatellites) and mitochondrial (mt)DNA from red hind (*Epinephelus guttatus*) and coney (*Epinephelus fulvus*) sampled primarily from the U.S. Caribbean; (ii) Develop for each species a genetics-based model of population structure and demography that includes genetic variation and distinctiveness, patterns and levels of migration (mixing), degree(s) of population growth or decline, and (genetic) effective size; acquisition of both mitochondrial and nuclear genetic data will permit the first comparison of the above parameters between females and males in protogynous hermaphrodites; and (iii) Develop population-genetic tools for future studies of yellowfin and tiger groupers.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project addressed are #2 (Caribbean Fisheries), and #3 (Recreational and Charter Fishery). Sub-priorities include 1.a.6 (improve life-history information, provide insight on stock(s) resilience, improve information on reproductive characteristics) and 1.b (monitoring stock abundance).

Summary of Work:

Acquire tissues from each grouper species at three localities in the U.S. Caribbean, one locality in the British Virgin Islands, and one locality in the Florida Keys; (ii) acquire genotypes at ~15 microsatellites from 1,000 individuals (100/locality/species) and sequences of mitochondrial DNA from 300 individuals (30/locality/species); (iii) execute data analysis to answer four questions: (a) Are there multiple 'genetic' stocks of each species in waters of the U.S. Caribbean, and if so, what are their geographic boundaries? (b) What are the patterns and rates of migration between or among sampling localities in each species? (c) What are the demographic dynamics (population growth/decline) in both species at each of the sampling localities and (d) What are the effective population sizes of each species at each sampling locality and do effective sizes differ among localities? (iv) test PCR primers for amplification of genetic markers in yellowfin and tiger groupers; and (v) prepare reports as required by NMFS.

NA08NMF4540400

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY (CONT.)

Project Funding:

Federal	\$238,648
Non-Federal	\$59,686
Total	\$298,334

NA08NMF4540401

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Gulf Fishermen's Association finfish bycatch survey cooperative research project for the Eastern Gulf of Mexico

Project Start Date: July 1, 2008

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Gulf Fishermen's Association Inc.

2860 Dartmouth Ave N.

St. Petersburg, FL 33713-7724

(813) 881-0150

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Glen Brooks, with over 27 years experience.

Project Goals and Objectives:

1. Random sampling and retention with human recording in NMFS SEFSC discard logbooks of reef fish species caught as bycatch, in 3 previously identified geographic areas of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, over the course of up to 1 year, utilizing common gear types: longline, handlines/bandit rigs, during regular fishing trips.
2. Installation and maintenance of up to 4 video monitoring devices that record landings on fishing vessels (2 longline, 2 handline/bandit) to test new technology for at-sea observations and recording catch information real-time strategically over 1 year. Professionals will read the videos, and data will be compared to human recording results in NMFS SEFSC discard logbooks, both during and in the absence of sampling retention.
3. 1 boat of each gear type (1 longline, 1 handline/bandit), some with monitoring devices and some without, will retain 100% of catch during a regular fishing trip, 2 times in 12 months, in each of 3 geographic areas, and bring it back to the dock for NMFS review.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); a.1.

Summary of Work:

The proposed project is a 1 year reef finfish bycatch survey in federal waters of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico. The project will collect data that aid in: recovering, maintaining, and improving the status of stocks upon which Gulf fisheries depend; improving the understanding of factors affecting long-term sustainability of the fisheries; and generating increased values and opportunities for fisheries by providing usable and relevant information to aid fishery researchers, scientists, and managers to make informed management decisions.

NA08NMF4540401

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY (CONT.)

Project Funding:

Federal	\$272,445
Non-Federal	\$286,300
Total	\$558,795

NA08NMF4540402

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Vertical and horizontal habitat use of yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) in the northern Gulf of Mexico: implications for standardization of catch rates.

Project Start Date: July 1, 2008

Status: Active

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Texas A&M Research Foundation
3578 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-3578
(979) 847-8778

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. Jay R. Rooker has over 15 years experience in Marine Science.

Project Goals and Objectives:

1. Determine habitat use of yellowfin tuna in the northern Gulf using PAT tag technology
2. Investigate vertical and horizontal movements of yellowfin tuna inside (eastern Gulf) and outside (western Gulf) the Loop Current
3. Develop an Atlantic and Gulf wide mechanistic model for standardization of longline CPUE using an index of expected habitat use

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project addressed are #2 (Caribbean Fisheries).

Summary of Work:

The research will evaluate pop-up satellite archival tags (PSAT) to study Atlantic tuna habitat use and movement. That tuna data are needed to develop more integrated and spatially explicit fishery management strategies. The researchers and charter vessel captains will use 40 pop-up satellite archival tags (PSAT) on yellowfin tuna at sea. Vertical and horizontal movement data will be collected from the PSATs following release of the fish. That data will be used to determine the PSAT effectiveness, and to link Atlantic tuna habitat use to oceanographic features.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$223,186
Non-Federal	\$41,333
Total	\$264,519

Appendix 2b. Completed CRP Project Summaries
(Describes the completed/closed CRP projects)

NA04NMF4540210

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Cooperative Hook and Line Sampling Project Identifying Catch Composition, Life History, and Bycatch of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Deep Water Reef Fish Complex

Project Start Date: October 1, 2004

Status: Completed

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Fish Master Inc.
1462 Xavier Ave.
Ft. Myers, FL 33919
(239) 437-1630

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Eric Schmidt has over 20 years of fishing experience in this area.

Project Goals and Objectives: The primary goals of the project are to collect aging and reproductive materials from deep-water reef fish and to make discard and bycatch observations.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 2(a), 2(d), and 2(f).

Summary of Work:

The project will conduct eight ten-day trips to collect samples and information from a traditional fishing area for deep-water species of the reef fish complex. Otoliths and gonads will be collected, processed, and given to the NMFS Panama City Laboratory. Standard, catch, discard, and bycatch information will be given to the NMFS and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council for use in assessments and development of fishery regulations.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$47,753
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$47,753

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Investigating Gag Recruitment Processes Using Otolith Chemical and Genetic Markers

Project Start Date: June 1, 2004

Status: Completed

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Florida State University
Dept. of Biological Science
97 S. Woodward Ave., 3rd Floor
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4166
(850) 644-2019

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. Felicia Coleman and Dr. Chris Koenig have studied and published extensively on gag and the reef fish fishery. They have over 50 years of experience and are well qualified to complete the project. Dr. David Secor has expertise in marine fisheries ecology and otolith microconstituent analysis.

Project Goal and Objectives:

The primary goal is to determine the most significant source areas (essential seagrass habitat) for juvenile recruits to the adult gag fishery. A secondary goal is to investigate patterns of genetic diversity in juvenile cohorts to detail recruitment processes. Objectives include: 1) evaluate the relative contribution of juvenile nursery areas to the adult population using chemical signatures in otoliths; 2) evaluate regional levels of parentage and relatedness of juvenile cohorts using microsatellite marks; and 3) progress toward development of a predictive juvenile index of abundance of gag off the west coast of Florida.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to A (Commercial Finfish); 2(f) improve life history information and biological investigations on commercial finfish species; especially about the age-structure of the catch based on otolith or other hard-part age readings; improve information on the reproductive characteristics of the stock to provide a basis for refining estimates of long-term potential productivity of the stock; and C (Recreational and Charter Fishery) 4(c) investigations of essential fisheries habitat for gag.

Summary of Work:

The project will determine the most significant source areas for juvenile recruits to the adult gag fishery. Patterns of genetic relatedness and parentage in juveniles will be examined to add to a time-series data set that can be used to develop a fisheries-oriented model of juvenile abundance. Otoliths will be examined using inductively-coupled plasma mass spectrometry to determine origin of juveniles. Information from the project will be used to begin development

NA04NMF4540213

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY (CONT.)

of a model to estimate recruitment of juvenile gag and to determine the utility of marine protected areas.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$300,000
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$300,000

NA05NMF4540039

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Cooperative Project Sampling of the Vertical Line Fishery Sampling Reproductive and Hard Part Tissues of Vermilion Snapper and Red Grouper in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico

Project Start Date: January 1, 2006

Status: Completed

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Fish Master Inc.
1462 Xavier Ave.
Ft. Myers, FL 33919
(239) 437-1630

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Eric Schmidt has over 20 years of fishing experience in this area.

Project Goal and Objectives:

The primary goal is to collect life history information on red grouper and vermilion snapper. The project will focus on collecting reproductive samples from red grouper and age samples from vermilion snapper. The samples will be taken from the central and southwestern shelf of west Florida, which will complement samples from other areas. Information on habitat will be collected to compare possible differences in life history parameters among different habitat types.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 1(f).

Summary of Work:

The project will conduct 14 eight-day trips over 18 months to collect gonads and otoliths from red grouper and vermilion snapper. Samples, including length and weight of individual fish, will be collected according to NMFS protocol and delivered to NMFS for analyses. Specific sites will be sampled to allow NMFS scientists to identify potential differences between growth and reproductive rates among the selected sites.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$121,352
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$121,352

NA05NMF4540044

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: A Project to Augment the Data Collection and Development of an Electronic Logbook System (ELB) Used within the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery

Project Start Date: February 1, 2005

Status: Completed

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc.

5401 W. Kennedy Blvd., Suite 740

Tampa, FL 33609

(813) 286-8390

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Judy Jamison, with over 24 years of experience.

Project Goal and Objectives:

This project will: 1) complement the current ELB study with onboard observers to collect data on fishing effort, red snapper bycatch, and shrimp landings; 2) analyze all observer collected data to further ensure that ELB landings estimates are accurate; 3) determine the spatial-temporal abundance of juvenile red snapper, compute a total mortality (Z) estimate for shrimp-trawl red snapper bycatch, and conduct a formal cohort analysis (VPA) on all observer collected red snapper data; and 4) further develop the ELB system to be more robust and usable.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority D (Commercial Shrimp Harvest); 3.

Summary of Work:

This project will complement an existing ELB project with contracted observers. Each observer will collect shrimp total shrimp landings (no subsample) and total red snapper bycatch data. All observers will be placed randomly on vessels cooperating in the ELB project. Data collected during the project will be used to conduct a formal cohort analysis (VPA) and compute mortality

estimates for all Foundation collected red snapper data (both past and present). Results will be used to validate ELB landings estimates by region (statistical zone) and to assist fisheries managers in the assessment of the red snapper stock.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$368,284
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$368,284

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Catch characterization and discards within the snapper grouper vertical hook-and-line fishery of the south Atlantic United States

Project Start Date: June 1, 2006

Status: Completed

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation

Lincoln Center, Suite 740

5401 West Kennedy Blvd.

Tampa, FL 33609

(813) 286-8390

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Judy Jamison, Executive Director, has over 25 years of administrative and grants management experience. Dr. Michael Jepson has over 20 years of experience in research on fishing communities and the social impacts of fishery policy.

Project Goals and Objectives: The objective of this project is to: 1) implement a pilot observer program within the snapper-grouper vertical hook-and-line fishery of the South Atlantic United States; 2) contract and train fishery observers to collect data to quantify total catch, effort, and discards (including fate) within the fishery; and 3) with the assistance of the South Atlantic Sustainable Fisheries Association, Inc., actively solicit the participation of cooperating vessels to ensure a random sample of vessels is included in the study, and disseminate the results of data collected during the pilot program.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 1(a); and 1(d).

Summary of Work: A planning meeting will first be convened to discuss and strategically plan all aspects of the proposed work. The researchers will focus their research on quantifying the snapper-grouper vertical hook-and-line fishery through an observer based program, thereby increasing coverage and the impact of the data collected. The researchers will actively solicit the cooperation of fishing vessels and captains willing to participate in the observer program. Although vessel selection will be non-random (e.g., voluntary participation), all efforts will be made to increase the total number of vessels cooperating in the project, and the universe of vessels to which an observer can be assigned. The project will quantify effort, total catch, and discard mortality within the snapper-grouper vertical hook-and-line fishery. Sampling will occur year-round with effort proportionately distributed by season. Prior to the collection of catch data, the observer will complete a vessel characterization/ trip report form that will outline the specifics of the vessel, gear used, and dates fished.

NA06NMF4540059

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY (CONT.)

While on-site and actively fishing, the observer will then complete a catch characterization form. After all data have been entered and backed-up, the data will be archived at the Foundation's office where it will be available for use by interested parties.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$394,252
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$394,252

NA06NMF4540060

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: A Cooperative Research Approach to Estimating Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico King Mackerel Stock Mixing and Populations Dynamics Parameters

Project Start Date: June 1, 2006

Status: Completed

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

University of West Florida
11000 University Parkway
Pensacola, FL 32514-5750
(850) 857-6123

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. Will Patterson has 12 years of experience on research on age and growth, population dynamics, fisheries ecology, and otolith microchemistry.

Project Goals and Objectives: The overall goal of this project is to address data needs essential for effective management of Gulf and Atlantic king mackerel migratory groups. This will be accomplished through cooperative research between the researcher, commercial fisherman, charter boat captains, and the NMFS Panama City Laboratory.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 1(f).

Summary of Work: The research will: 1) estimate the temporal and spatial variability in stock mixing with natural tags derived from otolith shape and chemistry analyses, 2) estimate stock- and sex-specific von Bertalanffy growth parameters, and 3) provide gonad samples for ongoing research aimed at updating and more precisely estimating stock-specific age at maturity, batch fecundity, and annual fecundity functions. Results of this work will include mixing and biological parameter estimates critical to king mackerel management.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$304,036
Non-Federal	\$11,084
Total	\$315,120

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Populations structure and genetic demography of yellowtail, mutton, and lane snappers in the U.S. Caribbean fishery

Project Start Date: September 1, 2006

Status: Completed

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Texas A&M Research Foundation
3578 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-3578
(979) 847-8778

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Dr. John R. Gold has over 30 years experience in fish genetics. Dr. Eric Salliant has over 10 years of experience in molecular populations genetics of marine fishes.

Project Goals and Objectives:

The primary objectives are: (1) to acquire molecular-genetic data from nuclear-encoded loci and mitochondrial DNA from three species of shallow-water snappers (yellowtail snapper; mutton snapper; and lane snapper) sampled from the U.S. Caribbean; and (2) to develop for each species a rigorous, genetics-based model of populations structure and demography that includes genetic variation and distinctiveness, degrees(s) of population growth or decline, parameters and levels of migration (mixing), and (genetic) effective size. The overall objective is to provide critical data that can be applied (and updated periodically) to assessment and allocation of shallow-water snapper resources in waters of the U.S Caribbean.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 1(f), (2,a), (3,a) and Priority C (Caribbean fisheries) (2).

Summary of Work: The researchers will (i) Acquire tissues from each snapper species at four localities in the U.S. Caribbean, one locality in the British Virgin Islands, and one locality in the Florida Keys; (ii) acquire genotypes at 12-15 microsatellites from 1,350 individuals and sequences of mitochondrial DNA from 450 individuals; (iii) execute data analysis to answer four questions: (a) are there multiple 'genetic' stocks of each species in U.S. Caribbean waters, and if so, what are their geographic boundaries? (b) What are the patterns and rates of migration between or among offshore sampling localities in each of the three species? (c) What are the demographic dynamics (population growth/decline and rate(s) of growth/decline) in any of the species at any of the sampling localities? And (d) What are the effective population sizes of each species at each sampling locality and do effective sizes differ among localities?

NA06NMF4540061

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY (CONT.)

Project Funding:

Federal	\$269,577
Non-Federal	\$45,113
Total	\$314,690

NA06NMF4540062

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: Shrimp Trawl Bycatch Reduction in the western Gulf of Mexico – Federal waters

Project Start Date: May 1, 2006

Status: Completed

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Harry Davis, Jr.
209 Acorn Oak St.
Somerville, TX 77879
(979) 596-3172

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Harry Davis, Jr. has over 50 years of shrimping experience, and developed a NMFS-certified bycatch reduction device, thereby receiving two NOAA Environmental Hero Awards.

Project Goals and Objectives: The objective is to design and test several net and bycatch reduction device configurations in the western Gulf of Mexico so as to reduce bycatch.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish) (3).

Summary of Work: The researcher will design and test several net and bycatch reduction device configurations (two seam balloon; four seam; Davis experimental four seam flat; Davis pre-Turtle Excluder Device; and modified Jones-Davis) using comparative experimental methodology.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$25,832
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$25,832

NA06NMF4540063

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title: The capture depth, time and hooked survival rate for bottom longline caught large coastal sharks.

Project Start Date: May 1, 2006

Status: Completed

Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Applicant:

Mr. George H. Burgess and Ms. Alexia C. Morgan
Florida Museum of Natural History
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611
(352) 392-2360

Principal Investigator(s) and Brief Statement of Qualifications:

Mr. Burgess has over 30 years of experience with marine fisheries and has published extensively on sharks and shark fisheries. Currently, he is the Director, Florida Program for Shark Research. Ms. Alexia Morgan is a research biologist who has been the coordinator for the Commercial Shark Observer Fishery Observer Program for over 5 years.

Project Goal and Objectives:

The goal of this project is to work continue with commercial bottom long-line shark fishers to collect more detailed data pertaining to the relationship between soak time and capture depth on fishing mortality and catch per unit effort of individual shark species and shark species aggregates. Objectives include: 1) determine what length of time the fishing gear is in the water prior to a shark biting and being hooked and at what point during the fishing process, i.e., deployment, fishing or retrieval, individual sharks are hooked; 2) obtain more accurate data pertaining to the length of time individual shark species remain alive after being hooked on bottom long-line fishery gangions; and 3) using depth stratified sampling, record the accurate depths of capture of sharks and provide a description of the depth range and catch per unit effort by depth for up to 25 species of sharks. Fishers will use gear and fishing techniques currently employed in the large coastal shark fishery.

Specific Priority(ies) in Solicitation to which Project Responds:

This project responds directly to priority A (Commercial Finfish); 3 Projects are needed to develop and test gear and fishing strategies designed to reduce or eliminate unintended catch.

NA05NMF4540063

CRP PROJECT SUMMARY (CONT.)

Summary of Work:

Scientists will work with two commercial shark long-liners to obtain catch information. Hook timers will be used to identify how long individual sharks remain on the line after being caught on hooks. Time depth recorders will be used to record the depth at which the bottom long-line is fishing and will be used to indicate the total time between the setting and retrieval of the gear. Time and depth will be recorded at one-minute intervals. Information will be delivered to NMFS for analysis and use by fishery managers to develop strategies to minimize the catch of unwanted shark species. Also, information will be distributed to commercial fishermen to assist them in reducing catch of unwanted shark species.

Project Funding:

Federal	\$97,686
Non-Federal	\$ 0
Total	\$97,686

Appendix 3. Federal Funding Opportunity for FY 2008

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Cooperative Research Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NMFS-SE-2008-2001003

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.454, Unallied Management Projects.

Dates: Applications must be received by 5:00pm, eastern time on August 31, 2007. For applications submitted through Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. Facsimile transmission and electronic mail submission of applications will not be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: The CRP program provides financial assistance for projects that seek to increase and improve the working relationship between researchers from the NMFS, state fishery agencies, universities, and fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico and off the South Atlantic states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida involving the U.S. fishing industry (recreational and commercial). The program is a means of involving commercial and recreational fishermen in the collection of fundamental fisheries information. Collection efforts support the development and evaluation of management and regulatory options.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

CRP is a competitive Federal assistance program that funds projects seeking to increase and improve the working relationship between researchers from the NMFS, state fishery agencies, universities, and fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico and off the South Atlantic states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida involving the U.S. fishing industry (recreational and commercial). Congress has initiated the cooperative research funding to assist the NMFS to improve the confidence that both commercial and recreational fishermen have in the data and analyses performed in support of fisheries management. The authorizing statute for the Cooperative Research Program is 15 U.S.C. 713c-3(d).

The CRP has as its principal goal to provide a means of involving commercial and recreational fishermen in the collection of fundamental fisheries information to support the development and evaluation of management and regulatory options.

B. Program Priorities

You are encouraged to address one of the priority areas listed below as they pertain to Federally managed species or species relevant to Federal fisheries management plans, but proposals in other areas will be considered. If you select more than one priority, you should list first on your application the priority that most closely reflects the objectives of your proposal. Projects should focus on the greatest probability of collecting data that aids in recovering, maintaining, or improving the status of stocks upon which fisheries depend; improving the understanding of factors affecting recruitment success and long-term sustainability of fisheries; and/or generating increased values and opportunities for fisheries.

The main premise for a CRP project is to provide usable and relevant information to aid fishery researchers, scientists, and managers to make informed management decisions. As such, priority needs are for information which can be utilized for assessments in the future. The Southeast Data Assessment Review (SEDAR) Steering Committee has established a schedule of assessment priority species through the year 2013. Projects which focus on providing information pertaining to these species of concern may be given priority selection. Those species of concern are listed by Fisheries Management Council:

Caribbean Fisheries Management Council (GMFMC) (the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands): yellowtail snapper, spiny lobster, queen triggerfish, deepwater snappers, red hind, parrotfish, shrimp, and grunts.

Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council (GMFMC)(Gulf of Mexico EEZ from the west coast of Florida through Texas): king mackerel, red snapper, yellowedge grouper, tilefish, hogfish, gag grouper, red grouper, goliath grouper, vermilion snapper, yellowtail snapper, spiny lobster, shrimp, and grey triggerfish.

South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (SAFMC)(South Atlantic EEZ from North Carolina to the east coast of Florida): king mackerel, greater amberjack, red snapper, Spanish mackerel, white grunt, red drum, golden tilefish, snowy grouper, hogfish, vermilion snapper, black seabass, speckled hind, gag, red porgy, Warsaw grouper, shrimp, and goliath grouper.

Projects will also be evaluated as to the likelihood of achieving the following priorities, with consideration of the magnitude of the eventual economic or social benefits that may be realized.

1. Commercial Finfish:

There are several priorities within this general category that pertain to the collection of catch, effort, size frequency, bycatch, and detailed data on fishing area by vessels in the commercial fisheries for finfish species.

a. Characterize the total catch (from all fleets affecting the stocks), including catch composition and disposition of the catch.

(1) Projects are needed to collect detailed information on the composition and disposition of bycatch and discards.

(2) Investigations are needed to determine more efficient methods to record catches accurately on a real-time basis during fishing operations (e.g. electronic logbooks).

(3) Projects are needed to develop methods to increase the amount of at-sea observations utilizing imaging systems.

(4) Projects are needed to utilize fully scientific observers on-board vessels as a means of collecting detailed catch, effort and disposition data. In cases where vessel space does not permit adding an observer, it may be possible to designate the captain or a crew member to record these data. Projects must specify the type of training and equipment that is required to assure that reliable data are collected.

(5) Data collection projects are needed to determine the effects on discard rates of increasing size limits or reducing possession limits. If discard mortality rates are high, changes in size or bag limits may unintentionally lessen conservation benefits. Discard mortality rates currently used in assessments are generally based on small numbers of observations or are unknown. Research is needed to improve estimates of discard mortality rates and must account for the effects of fish size, gear, area, season and depth of fishing.

(6) Data collection projects are needed to improve life history information on commercial finfish species. Improved information about the age-structure of the catch (both retained and discarded), based on otolith or other hard-part aging techniques, will provide insight on a stock's resilience to fishing. Improved information on the reproductive characteristics of the stock will provide information to refine estimates of long-term biological productivity of the stock.

b. Monitoring stock abundance through study-fleet applications. This type of cooperative research requires long-term commitment in terms of funding and application.

(1) One objective is to develop a consistent sampling methodology that will permit monitoring of the relative abundance of a fishery resource over time. An initial step for such a project is to develop sampling designs and protocols for sampling fleet catches to estimate relative abundance, including standardization of fishing power of individual vessels.

(2) Projects are needed to develop methods to determine appropriate sampling designs and pilot studies to estimate recruitment to selected fisheries. An example is the development of a recruitment index for Young-of-the-Year gag or red grouper in the Gulf of Mexico.

c. Projects are needed to develop and test gear and fishing strategies designed to reduce or eliminate unintended catch.

d. Fishing Capacity Investigations: There appears to be a wide disparity between the current capacity of regional fishing fleets and the productivity of regional stocks. Cooperative research to optimize the capacity of regional fishing fleets is needed. A number of possibilities ranging from Individual Quota Systems to Vessel Capacity Control programs should be considered. It is likely that regional/fishery differences may require different approaches.

e. Monitor the effects of closed Marine Protected Areas: Research is needed to measure the response of marine resources to creation or expansion of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Projects should utilize fishermen's knowledge of critical habitat of harvested species.

(1) Projects are needed to assess the impacts of time/area closures in the Southeast Region that have been designated to protect finfish spawning aggregations and/or concentrations of sub-legal fish.

(2) Projects are needed to collect fine-scale catch-effort data to define the spatial and temporal dimensions of MPAs.

2. Caribbean Fisheries:

a. Habitat and fisheries:

(1) Research and data are needed to estimate the social and economic impacts that are associated with MPA closures. Currently the Caribbean has five seasonal closures in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) for spawning aggregations of fish and one no-take zone consisting of an annual closure. The size of these areas is small compared to MPAs established on the mainland, but constitute a significant portion of the fishing grounds in the Caribbean. Although research has been conducted on the biological impacts of several no-take zones, little, if any, research has been done to estimate the impacts of closures on fishing communities.

(2) Projects are needed also to investigate the biological and socioeconomic effects of alternating either temporal or spatial closures of MPAs.

(3) Cooperative projects between scientists and industry members are needed to enhance studies of the effectiveness of MPAs. Industry members can provide useful information concerning siting of MPAs, especially relating to spawning aggregations and nursery grounds of juvenile fishes. In addition, mark and recapture experiments can employ industry members, especially concerning recovery of tags.

b. Corals:

(1) Research is needed to determine the impact on coral reefs from commercial fishing operations. Industry participation is needed to determine the impacts of gear on coral reefs.

(2) Research is needed to determine the impacts on coral reefs from recreational fishing activities. Information on recreational fishing activities is sparse and there are approximately 60,000 recreational vessels in the Caribbean. Research should focus on diving, recreational boating and anchoring on coral reefs.

3. Recreational and Charter Fishery:

a. Socioeconomic research:

(1) Research is needed to determine the number of recreational fishermen and related trips.

(2) Data needs to be collected to identify the socioeconomic characteristics of the recreational and charter boat industries.

(3) In addition to data collection activities, research is needed to determine the economic benefits and costs associated with recreational fishing.

b. Research on Management Alternatives: Investigations should include benefits and costs to the stocks, as well as socioeconomic benefits/costs to participants in the fishery.

(1) Research is needed to determine the effects of seasonal closures and MPAs on the recreational and charter boat industries.

(2) Research is needed to determine the effects of seasonal closures and MPAs on spawning stocks and resulting recruitment.

(3) Research is needed to determine the impacts of bag and size limits on species that are important to recreational and charter boat industries. Projects should emphasize the effects of alternatives size limits.

(4) Research is needed to determine discard mortality rates. At-sea observers on recreational and charter boat trips are one way to perform this type of research and should be considered.

Catch/Effort Data: Projects are needed to improve catch and effort data for private recreational fishermen. The projects should identify sample sizes, including number of intercept interviews and dock samples, required to achieve standard statistical levels of accuracy and precision.

c. Habitat Research:

(1) Research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of artificial reefs. Projects should examine the value of artificial reefs to fishing communities, and estimate associated economic impacts.

(2) Research is needed to determine the impacts and effects of harmful algal blooms, such as red tide, on recreational and charter boat fisheries. (3) Investigations are needed to determine essential fishery habitat for certain species such as gag and goliath grouper.

4. Commercial Shrimp Harvest:

a. Social and economic impact of fluctuations in domestic shrimp values:

(1) Research is needed on the effects on the domestic shrimp fishery of shrimp imports from foreign countries.

(2) Research is needed to determine the social and economic impacts of imports on fishermen and fishing communities. Research should include impacts on communities and the industry as a whole.

Identifying Non-Trawlable Areas: Research is needed to investigate how habitat enhancements of non-trawlable areas could benefit shrimp fisheries. For example, artificial reefs could be established in non-trawlable areas and the impacts on shrimp and finfish populations could be evaluated. Such research should determine if enhancements would increase habitat for juvenile and adult fish, i.e. red snapper.

Quantification of Effort: Research is needed to improve shrimp effort data. Projects need to consider recommendations derived from negotiations with the shrimp industry. Areas of concern are insurance for at-sea observers, acceptable gear and protection of confidential data collected by the project.

Bycatch Reduction Device Testing Protocols: There is a need to develop more efficient methods to certify finfish bycatch reduction devices. Protocols should benefit both the resource and the shrimp industry.

Quantification of Bycatch Rates: Statistical research is needed to ensure that extrapolation of the results of individual trawl bycatch surveys to the fleet are statistically valid. The procedures should account for the total range of conditions found in all major fishing areas. The research should estimate the number of scientific fishery observers that should be employed to collect bycatch information for prevailing conditions and areas. The project should describe the statistical accuracy and precision of estimates for each major fishing area in addition to the total fishing area. This is critical to improving stock assessments, especially in the Gulf of Mexico.

C. Program Authority

Authority for the CRP is provided by the following: 15 U.S.C. 713c-3(d).

D. Cost Principles

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; and A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments." Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable."

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Approximately \$2.0 million may be available in fiscal year (FY) 2008 for projects. Actual funding availability for this program is contingent upon Fiscal Year 2008 Congressional appropriations. The NMFS Southeast Regional Office estimates awarding eight projects that will range from \$25,000 to \$400,000. The average award is \$150,000. Publication of this notice does not obligate NMFS to award any specific grant or cooperative agreement or any of the available funds.

B. Project/Award Period

The period of awards may be from one to two years. Recipients are required to submit written semiannual reports during the project to describe the progress made toward the goals and deliverables established in the original proposal and agreed-upon time line. NMFS is substantially involved as a partner in the cooperative research activities with the recipient. Substantial involvement includes planning, scheduling, conducting, and analyzing proposed project activities through semi-annual reports and frequent contact with the grantee to help solve technical problems/situations as they arise during performance of the award. A final report must also be submitted at the conclusion of the project.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding will be funded through a cooperative agreement. NMFS is substantially involved as a partner in the cooperative research activities with the recipient.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants may be Institutions of higher education, nonprofits, commercial organizations, individuals, and state, local, and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible. Foreign governments, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, and international organizations are excluded for purposes of this solicitation since the objective of the CRP is to optimize research and development benefits from U.S. marine fishery resources.

Applicants who are not commercial or recreational fisherman must have commercial or recreational fishermen participating in their project. There must be a written agreement with a fisherman describing the involvement in the project activity.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Cost-sharing is not required for this program.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

All applicants must include a written agreement with a person employed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), who will act as a partner in the proposed research project.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Application packages are available through grants.gov. Only if applicants do not have internet access, applications may be requested from: National Marine Fisheries Service, State/Federal Liaison Branch, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

B. Content and Form of Application

1. Format Requirements:

All pages must be single-spaced and should be composed in at least a 12-point font with one-inch margins on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. The project description may not exceed 25 pages, exclusive of title page, project synopsis, literature cited, budget information, resumes of investigator, and letters of support (if any). Failure to follow the requirements will result in the rejection of the application and subsequent return.

Any PDF or other attachments that are included in an electronic application must meet the above format requirement when printed out.

2. Content Requirements:

The following information should be included:

a. Signed Title Page: The title page (SF-424) must be signed by the authorized representative. Electronic signatures submitted through grants.gov satisfy this requirement.

b. Project Synopsis (1-page limit): It is critical that the project synopsis accurately describes the project being proposed and conveys all essential elements of the activities. It is imperative that potential applicants tie their proposals to one of the program priorities described in Section I.B.

c. Project Description (25-page limit): The applicant should describe and justify the project being proposed and address each of the evaluation criteria as described below in Section V.

Project descriptions should include clear objectives and specific approaches to achieving those objectives, including methods, timelines, and expected outcomes.

d. Literature Cited: If applicable.

e. Budget and Budget Justification: There should be a detailed budget justification accompanying the SF-424 budget forms. Indicate matching funds if provided in a

separate column. Provide justifications for all budget items in sufficient detail to enable the reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested.

f. Resumes (2 pages maximum for each major participant).

g. Standard Application Forms: Please refer to the appropriate application package available through Grants.gov.

h. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, applicants are required to answer the following questions:

1. Has any National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or other environmental compliance documentation (e.g., Endangered Species Act Biological Opinion; Letter of Concurrence or Biological Assessment/Evaluation; Clean Water Act permit; State Historic Preservation Officer consultation; state environmental compliance documentation (mini-NEPA); etc.) been completed? If yes, list the environmental compliance documentation that has been completed and provide copies of the documentation as appropriate.
2. Would the proposed activity or environmental impacts of the activity be subject to public controversy? If yes, describe the potential controversy.
3. Would the proposed activity have potential environmental impacts that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks? If yes, describe the impacts that are uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
4. Is the proposed activity related to other activities (both NOAA and non-NOAA that together may cumulatively adversely impact the environment? For example, the proposed activity is one of a series of projects that together may cause a change in the pattern of pollutant discharge, traffic generation, economic change, flood plain change, or land use. If yes, briefly describe the other activities and discuss how the related projects would have cumulative impacts on the environment.
5. Would the proposed activity involve a non-native species? If yes, describe how the non-native species is involved.
6. Would the proposed activity occur within a unique geographic area of notable recreational, ecological, scientific, cultural, historical, scenic or aesthetic importance. If yes, describe the area, including the name or designation if known.
7. Would the proposed activity affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources? If yes, describe the impact.

8. Would the proposed activity affect public health or safety? The effects may be adverse or beneficial and temporary, long-term, or permanent. If yes, describe the effects and the circumstances that would cause these impacts.

9. Would the proposed activity affect directly or indirectly, in an adverse or beneficial manner, any listed endangered, threatened, or otherwise protected species or their critical habitat under federal and state laws including the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act? If yes, name the species and/or habitat that will be impacted and describe the circumstances that would impact the species and/or habitat.

Applications must identify the principal participants, and include copies of any agreements describing the specific tasks to be performed by participants. Project applications should give a clear presentation of the proposed work, the methods for carrying out the project, its relevance to managing and enhancing the use of Gulf of Mexico and/or South Atlantic fishery resources, and cost estimates as they relate to specific aspects of the project. Budgets must include a detailed breakdown, by category of expenditures, with appropriate justification for both the Federal and non-Federal shares.

Applications should exhibit familiarity with related work that is completed or ongoing. Proposals should state whether the research applies to the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic or North Atlantic for highly migratory species or multiple areas. Successful applicants are required to collect and manage data in accordance with standardized procedures and format approved or specified by NMFS and to participate with NMFS in specific cooperative activities that are determined by consultations between NMFS and successful applicants before project grants are awarded. All data collected as part of an awarded grant must be provided to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

All applicants must include a written agreement with a person employed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), who will act as a partner in the proposed research project. The NMFS partner will assist the applicant to develop a design for the project to assure that the outcome will provide suitable, scientific data and results to support needed fisheries management information.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications should be submitted via www.grants.gov and must be received by grants.gov by 5:00p.m. Eastern time on August 31, 2007 to be considered for funding. If grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, hard copy applications must be received in the program office by the deadline. Proposals received after the deadline will be rejected/returned to the sender without further consideration. Applications submitted through www.grants.gov will be accompanied by an automated receipt of the date and time of submission. Hard copy applications will be hand stamped with time and date when received.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOCs are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

E. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Costs - If the applicant does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a Federal agency, then they may direct cost all charges, or submit a request to establish a rate. The Federal share of indirect costs proposed must not exceed 25 percent of the total direct costs identified on NOAA Form 88-205 Project Budget.

Construction is not an allowable activity under this program. Therefore, applications will not be accepted for construction projects.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Applications should be submitted through www.grants.gov. Only if an applicant does not have internet access, hard copies may be sent to: National Marine Fisheries Service, State/Federal Liaison Branch, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Applications responsive to this solicitation will be evaluated by three or more appropriate private and/or public sector experts to determine their technical merit. These reviewers will provide individual evaluations of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given. These reviewers provide comments and assign scores to the applications based on the following criteria, with the weights shown in parentheses:

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals (40%): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, this includes: Does the proposal assist industry? Does the proposal address issues that are important to regional fishery management?

2. Technical/scientific merit (40%): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For this competition, this includes: Does the proposal

have a clearly stated goal(s) with associated objectives that meet the needs outlined in the project narrative? Does the proposal clearly identify and describe, in the project outline and statement of work, scientific methodologies and analytical procedures that will adequately address project goals and objectives? Do the principal investigators provide a realistic timetable to enable full accomplishment of all aspects of the research?

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (0%): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. This program does not use this criterion.

4. Project costs (20%): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. For this competition, this includes: How effective are the proposed methods in enabling the principal investigators to maintain stewardship of the finances? Does the budget appropriately allocate and justify costs?

5. Outreach and education (0%): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. This program does not use this criterion.

B. Review and Selection Process

When we receive applications we will screen them to ensure that they were received by the deadline date (see Submission Dates and Times); include SF 424 authenticated by an authorized representative; were submitted by an eligible applicant; address one of the funding priorities for federally managed species; and include a budget, statement of work, and milestones, and identify the principal investigator. We do not have to screen applications before the submission deadline in order to identify deficiencies that would cause your application to be rejected so that you would have an opportunity to correct them. However, should we do so and provide you information about deficiencies, or should you independently decide it is desirable to do so, you may correct any deficiencies in your application before the deadline. After the deadline, the application must remain as submitted; no changes can be made to it.

If your application does not conform to these requirements and the deadline for submission has passed, the application will be returned without further consideration.

Following the technical review, we will determine the weighted score for each individual review and average the individual technical review scores to determine the final technical score for each application. Then, we will rank applications in descending order by their average technical scores. The top twenty applications will be forwarded to a panel for further review. Those applications that are not in the top twenty category will be eliminated from further consideration.

Those applications that meet the top twenty ranking will be presented to a panel of non-NOAA fishery experts known as the CRP Panel. Each member of the CRP Panel individually considers: if needs of the Agency are addressed in each proposal; if the project assists industry; and if the project addresses issues that are important to regional fisheries management. Needs of the Agency follow the information identified in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Title III, Sections 301 and 404. The individuals on the Panel provide comments and rate each of these proposals as either "Recommended for Funding" or "Not Recommended for Funding". The Panel will give no consensus advice. The Program Manager ranks the proposals in the order of preferred funding based on the number of Panel members recommending the proposal for funding. If there are ties in the rankings, those ties will be distinguished by the peer review score.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based on the following factors.

1. Availability of funding
2. Balance/distribution of funds
 - a. geographically
 - b. by type of institutions
 - c. by type of partners
 - d. by research areas
 - e. by project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

The Selecting Official may negotiate the funding level of the proposal. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate funds.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, successful applications generally are recommended within 150 days from the date of publication of this notice. The earliest start date of awards average 90 days after each project is selected and after all NMFS/applicant negotiations of cooperative activities have been completed. The earliest start date of awards is about 180 days after the date of publication of this notice. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for their applications. Unsuccessful applications will be returned to the applicant.

The exact amount of funds awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NMFS cooperative involvement with the activities of each project are determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office and the NMFS Program Office. Recipients must not initiate projects until an approved award is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The notice of award is approved by the NOAA Grants Officer and is the authorizing document. All recipients are strongly encouraged to become enrolled in NOAA's Grants Online system. Every effort will be made to electronically review, approve, and transmit for countersignature awards to the appropriate business office of the recipient organization.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389). A copy of the notice may be obtained at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/search.html>

Limitation of Liability

Funding for potential projects in this notice is contingent upon the availability of funds. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with

NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA Web site:

<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA,

<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216--5--TOC.pdf>, NEPA Questionnaire,

<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/questionnaire.pdf>, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, <http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc--ceq.htm>.

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required.

Applicants will also be required to cooperation with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make as assessment of any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

C. Reporting

Financial reports are to be submitted to the NOAA Grants Officer identified in the award and Performance (technical) reports are to be submitted to the Federal Program Officer. Unless otherwise specified by terms of the award, program and financial reports are to be submitted semi-annually. Program reports should include progress on identified milestones. Electronic submission of performance reports is preferred. All reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. In addition to the financial and performance reports, grant recipients will be required to submit a comprehensive evaluation report 90 days after the project end date.

All data collected as part of the project must be submitted to the NMFS partner. Project data must be edited and verified as accurate by the applicant prior to being submitted to NMFS.

VII. Agency Contacts

For questions regarding the application process, you may contact: Robert Sadler, State/Federal Liaison Branch, (727) 824-5324, or Robert.Sadler@noaa.gov.

VIII. Other Information

We will award cooperative agreements for a maximum period of up to 24 months. The award period depends upon the duration of funding requested in the application, the decision of the NMFS selecting official on the amount of funding, the results of post-selection negotiations between the applicant and NOAA officials, and pre-award review of the application by NOAA and DOC officials. The earliest start date of awards (1st of a month) is about 180 days after the date of publication of this notice. You must also be available to respond to questions during the review and evaluation of the proposal(s).

If you are selected to receive a grant award for a project, you must:

1. Manage the day-to-day operations of the project, be responsible for the performance of all activities for which funds are granted, and be responsible for the satisfaction of all administrative and managerial conditions imposed by the award.
2. Keep records sufficient to document any costs incurred under the award, and allow access to these records for audit and examination by the Secretary of Commerce, the Comptroller General of the United States, or their authorized representatives; and submit financial status reports (SF 269) to NOAA Grants in accordance with the award conditions.