

## **United States-Mexico Fisheries Cooperation Program**

### **Basic Instrument**

There is no formal instrument establishing the United States-Mexico Fisheries Cooperation Program. The U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the predecessor agency to the Mexican Secretaría de Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales, y Pesca (SEMARNAT) informally agreed in 1983 to meet annually to review the broad range of issues involved in the bilateral fisheries relationship. There are three memoranda of understanding (MOU) since agreed to by NMFS and SEMARNAT to formalize different aspects of the fisheries relationship: (1) MEXUS-Gulf research program, (2) MEXUS-Pacifico research program, and (3) information exchange. The research MOUs have proven highly effective, but NMFS has been unable to arrange continuing reciprocal exchanges under the information exchange MOU, and it is currently inactive.

### **Implementing Legislation**

Two laws provide the legal authority for the Cooperation Program. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1822(a) authorizes the Secretary of State to negotiate international fishery agreements. Another law, 16 U.S.C. 1855(d), authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to promulgate regulations necessary to carry out the Magnuson Act.

### **Member Nations**

The United States and Mexico.

### **Budget**

There are no funds specifically budgeted for the program; costs are assumed in the operating budgets of the participating NMFS offices. Annual costs of the program including staff time, travel, translation services, and miscellaneous expenses total about \$60,000 annually. This does not include the cost of various working group meetings, such as the annual MEXUS-Gulf and MEXUS-Pacifico meetings or special meetings.

### **Representation**

The annual Fishery Cooperation Talks (FCTs) are coordinated by NMFS and Mexico's Subsecretaría de Pesca (PESCA). Both agencies often invite other agencies to participate in the meetings. NMFS has invited representatives from other NOAA line offices, the Food and Drug Administration, Department of Interior (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), U.S. Coast Guard, and the Department of State, as well as state government officials. PESCA has invited other government units such as the Instituto Nacional de Pesca, and the Procurator General para el Ambiente (PROFEPA), the Secretaría de Comercio, the Secretaría de Salud, and the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores.

### **Description**

#### **A. Mission/Purpose:**

The participants have agreed to periodically review the United States-Mexican fisheries relationship. The FCT discussions serve to reinforce the longstanding cooperative relationship between the United States and Mexico on fishery issues. Formal and informal sessions provide opportunities to exchange information and discuss major issues.

#### B. Programs:

NMFS and PESCA normally meet annually, alternating meetings between the United States and Mexico. Working group meetings are held as needed. The two science working groups, MEXUS-Gulf and MEXUS-Pacífico, also meet annually. Other working group meetings are held as required on such matters as enforcement, management, aquaculture, and other issues.

Initially, the participants decided to omit the most contentious issues and focus on those issues where it was possible to reach some agreement on mutually beneficial projects. As a result, considerable progress was made during the 1980s in expanding cooperative research programs and better understanding each country's fishery laws and policies. The relationship matured during the 1990s; recent meetings have included discussions on management, enforcement, recreational fisheries, marine mammals and endangered species. The meetings help to inform participants of national programs affecting the other country. The participants in recent years have widened the scope of some research projects to include coordinated management and other issues.

#### C. Conservation and Management Measures:

Conservation and management issues are generally the major topics discussed at the meetings. The protection of marine mammals and endangered species (especially turtles and mammals) were for several years the focus of discussions. More recently, there have been information exchanges and a sharing of management experiences on various fishery resources. Shark and shrimp management and bycatch reduction in particular have been discussed in some detail. Mexico has taken the initiative in pursuing possible cooperation on Gulf of Mexico shrimp management.

#### D. 2005 Meeting:

The 22<sup>nd</sup> FCT took place in La Jolla, California, on October 13-14, 2005. The Mexican delegation was led by National Aquaculture and Fisheries (CONAPESCA) Commissioner Ramon Corral. Officials of CONAPESCA, the Mexican National Fisheries Institute, Foreign Relations (SRE), and Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) also participated on behalf of Mexico. The U.S. delegation was led by Dr. William Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service. Officials of NMFS, the Department of State, and the Coast Guard also participated on behalf of the United States. The delegations discussed sustainable fisheries management and the protection and conservation of species such as dolphins and sea turtles, as well as various fisheries-related trade issues, and the participation of the two countries in fisheries-related international organizations. They agreed to exchange information and to work together on those subjects, including through collaborative scientific research in the framework of the MEXUS-Gulf and MEXUS-Pacific bilateral agreements.

#### E. Future Meetings

The 23<sup>rd</sup> FCT will take place in Veracruz in September 2006.

#### **Staff Contact**

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