

Trip Tickets in Mississippi

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ABSTRACT

Trip tickets are increasingly being used to collect commercial landings information. A trip ticket is a form completed by a fisherman or seafood dealer on an individual fishing trip at the point of first sale. Though commercial landings information has been collected for years, there is a need for more specific and accurate information. Trip tickets are a relatively new method for collecting commercial landings data for most coastal states. The Atlantic states have been operating under the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) since 1998. The Pacific states have been using trip tickets since 1981. In the Gulf of Mexico, Florida began a commercial landings data collection program utilizing trip tickets in 1984. Louisiana began a program in January 1999, and most recently Alabama implemented trip ticket use in August 2000, while Texas is currently in the developmental stages. Mississippi implemented a working scannable trip ticket for its oyster program in January 2000. Currently, Mississippi is in the process of developing a trip ticket program for other segments of its fisheries. The information collected provides per trip catch and the associated effort by species and gear. This data provides the basic trip information, and when coupled with biological data (i.e. length and age), makes for sound management regulations. In addition, trip tickets provide an overall view of the number of participants in a fishery, and along with the participants' history, can aid in establishing proof of involvement in a fishery for any possible limited entry system. Trip tickets can also provide the economic worth of a particular fishery.

KEY WORDS: Data collection, fisheries management, trip tickets

INTRODUCTION

A variety of commercial fisheries data collection programs have been used in the past, many of which continue to operate through state and federal agencies. A comprehensive and cooperative data collection program will be invaluable to fisheries managers. The development of a trip ticket program for fisheries management will provide information that is long-term in scope, timely and comprehensive (FIN Committee 1996).

A trip ticket program is a method to collect commercial seafood landings and associated fishing information for individual fishing trips. A trip ticket is a form usually completed by a fisherman or seafood dealer on an individual fishing trip at the point of first sale. The information that is recorded on a trip ticket includes the fisherman or dealer's license number, vessel registration, and the date, state, county, and port landed. Also recorded are the area fished, gear type, species caught,

quantity, count or market size, and the price per unit. When combined with the total quantity caught, effort information by gear type can be obtained by recording the actual time fished. Catch and effort statistics are fundamental for determining the influence of fishing on fishing stocks. Detection of population trends requires statistically consistent data collected over the geographic range of the stock for a time period that is several times longer than the lifespan of the animal (FIN Committee 1996).

Trip tickets are quickly becoming the standard method of marine commercial landings collection throughout the United States. Individual trip information provides fishery scientists with gear and area specific catch information that will improve the accuracy of stock assessments. It will also provide information on the impact of environmental changes and catastrophic events, such as hurricanes, on the fishery (LDWF 1998). These data collected provide the basic information, when coupled with biological data (i.e. length and age) for sound management decisions. In addition, trip tickets provide an overall view of the number of participants in a fishery and, along with the participants' history, can aid in establishing proof of involvement in a fishery for any possible limited entry system. Trip tickets can also provide the economic worth of a particular fishery.

HISTORY OF TRIP TICKET DEVELOPMENT

The collection of statistics for commercial fishing in the United States began in the late 1800s with the start of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries. These early statistics were composed mostly of monthly landings for broad market categories of marine and some freshwater species (FIN Committee 1996).

Efforts by state and federal agencies to develop a cooperative statistic program (CSP) for the collection of commercial and recreational data in the Southeast region began in the mid to late 1980s. In 1994, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) began a formal process to collect and manage commercial fishery statistics by outlining a strategy and schedule for developing the program and completing a strategic plan. It emphasized a cooperative program in conjunction with state and federal fishery management agencies, regional fishery management councils, interstate marine fishery commissions and other marine fishery management organizations (FIN Committee 1999).

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) is a state-federal cooperative system designed to improve the collection and management of fisheries data. The program began in November 1995 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) by 23 Atlantic coast fisheries management agencies. A detailed Operations Plan was approved and used over the next two years to design the details of the ACCSP commercial, as well as recreational and for-hire data collection programs and the ACCSP data management system. The Atlantic states have been operating under this system since 1998 (ACCSP 1998).

The Fisheries Information Network (FIN) established a state-federal cooperative program to collect, manage and disseminate statistical data and

information on the commercial and recreational fisheries of the Southeast Region (FIN Committee. 1999). The ACCSP and the FIN will collect and manage fishery data for the management of fishery resources in the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf regions. One of the goals is to eventually establish a national program consisting of the ACCSP, FIN, and the Pacific Finfish Information Network (PacFIN), to which all members will contribute and have access. PacFIN has had a trip ticket program in place since 1981.

There are two programs under FIN, the Commercial Fisheries Information Network (ComFIN) and the Southeast Recreational Fisheries Information Network (RecFINSE). The Southeast Cooperative Statistics Committee (SCSC) developed a MOU and framework plan for ComFIN. The mission of the ComFIN is to:

“cooperatively collect, manage, and disseminate marine commercial and anadromous fishery data and information for the conservation and management of fishery resources in the Southeast Region and to support development of an inter-regional program” (FIN Committee 1996).

The trip ticket program is the backbone of ComFIN. The first step to its implementation is the initiation of trip ticket programs in each state in the Gulf of Mexico to ensure that all landings are captured (FIN Committee 1999). Florida was the first state to implement a trip ticket program, followed by Louisiana and recently Alabama. Mississippi has an established trip ticket program for oysters and is currently working on implementing trip tickets for the remaining fisheries. Texas is also developing a trip ticket program in their state.

Florida's commercial landings data collection program began in 1984 with the advent of a marine fisheries trip ticket program. Before this, monthly landings summaries were collected by the NMFS from dealers on a voluntary basis. In 1985, both programs were used to make sure the data was comparable. Licensed wholesale and retail seafood dealers are required to send trip information on a monthly basis, weekly for those species that are regulated under state or federal quotas (FDEP, 1995).

The Louisiana Legislature established Louisiana's trip ticket program in 1991. Funding for the program became available in 1998, and the program began January 1, 1999. The trip ticket program replaced the monthly dealer reporting system. A trip ticket and monthly submission sheet must be filled out by dealers that buy fish from commercial fishermen and by commercial fishermen that sell their catch to someone other than a dealer. The monthly submission sheet documents the number of trip tickets filled out each time they are sent to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. If no trips are taken, a sheet is still required indicating that no transactions took place (LDWF 1998).

Alabama's trip ticket program is similar to Louisiana's but began August 1, 2000. As in Louisiana, trip tickets are due by the 10th of the month for the preceding month. They have a Trip Ticket Summary Sheet (similar to Louisiana's monthly submission sheet) that must be submitted with each trip ticket mailing. Obtaining trip

tickets is the responsibility of the dealer, processor or commercial fisherman. They are assigned to a specific entity and cannot be shared with others (AMRD 2000).

REGULATORY ASPECTS

For trip tickets to work and achieve a balance between obtaining needed catch, effort and economic information and protecting the sources of the data, several federal mandates, state statute and ordinance regulations have been enacted. In 1981 the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan for the Gulf of Mexico was approved under the authority of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The management plan contains provisions for the collection of shrimp catch and made the NMFS responsible for developing and implementing a data collection program. This data collection program made upon request reporting shrimp catch, effort, price, and license information mandatory. Before this time, data collection was under a voluntary reporting program (50 CFR Part 658). To assist state and federal port agents working in the CSP the Mississippi Commission on Wildlife Conservation (MCWC) adopted Ordinance 111:

“An Ordinance to Establish Statistical Reporting Requirements and the Confidentiality of Statistical Data for Marine Fisheries in the State of Mississippi”, in 1982.

Ordinance 111 has been modified over the years and currently exists as the Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources (MCMR) Ordinance 9.002; however, the general reporting provisions of this ordinance have not changed substantially. This ordinance authorizes and empowers the port agents to obtain, upon request, catch, effort, price, and license information for each trip landed in Mississippi.

To protect the confidentiality of the information collected, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) set forth, under administrative order, prescribed policies and procedures. This order requires that before data is collected by the state, under the CSP, the state must have authority to protect the confidentiality of the data comparable to, or more stringent than, NMFS. The provisions of Mississippi law that provide proprietary information submitted to the state is exempt from public disclosure are the Public Records Act of 1983, Miss. Code Ann. § 79-23-1 (1972) and Ordinance 9.002. These laws protect the sources (dealer, processor or fisherman) from public disclosure of information that may harm their business. Catch information may be published, however, it must be in an aggregate form that cannot be traced to a specific source.

MISSISSIPPI'S OYSTER TRIP TICKET

Currently, Mississippi only uses trip tickets for data collection in the oyster fishery. In the early 1980s, enforcement personnel at oyster check stations obtained data on oyster catch from fishermen. At this time the main purpose of the check

station was to collect the shell retention fee for the oyster sacks. Oyster fishermen were and still are required to report to these stations with their catch in order to buy tags for their oyster sacks. The money obtained from the sale of the oyster sack tags was and is being used to plant cultch material on the public reefs. The only information recorded during this time was the name of the fisherman, sacks harvested, sequence numbers of the tags sold and money collected.

In 1991 the oyster division staff of the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) manned the check stations and what could be considered a true trip ticket (Figure 1) was instituted. The trip ticket was designed to collect information on oyster catch and effort on specific reef areas in Mississippi. In addition, the trip ticket was used to record the shell retention fees (shell tax) collected and harvester license data.

OYSTER TRIP TICKET NUMBER:		32652
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & PARKS BUREAU OF MARINE RESOURCES OYSTER TRIP TICKET		
DATE:	TIME OUT:	
LICENSE #:	TIME IN:	
HARVESTER'S NAME:		
BOAT NAME:		
REG. NO.:		
INTENDED HARVEST AREA:		
CHECK IN LOCATION:		
INSPECTOR:		
GEAR: TONG	DREDGE	OTHER
TYPE HARVEST: COMMERCIAL		RECREATIONAL
HARVEST AREA(S):		
SACKS PER AREA:		
TOTAL SACKS:	SHELL TAX: \$	
TAG SEQUENCE:		
NUMBER OF FISHERMEN:		
DESTINATION OF CATCH:		
THIS TICKET MUST REMAIN WITH CATCH!! MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & PARKS BUREAU OF MARINE RESOURCES 2620 BEACH BLVD. BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI 39531 (601) 385-5860		

Figure 1. Unscannable trip ticket utilized from 1991 - 1999


Mississippi's oyster catch increased dramatically during the mid 1990s causing the number of trip tickets to increase from a low of 4,900 in 1992 to 15,000 in 1998. Because these tickets are entered manually it utilized at least four people to enter the information in a timely manner. To enter the large amount of information gathered from oyster harvesting, a scannable trip ticket was proposed in 1999 and instituted in January of 2000.

The oyster fishery scannable trip ticket contains four pages of carbonless forms. These forms were designed to collect the catch, effort, shell retention fee and economic information for each trip in the oyster fishery. The first form, designated OTT-1 (Figure 2) is filled in by check station personnel and brought back to the office to be scanned. The second form, OTT-2 (Figure 3) is taken to the dealer by the harvester and is filled in by the dealer. Form OTT-2 is required to be at the Department of Marine Resources office to be scanned no later than the 10th of the following month from the month the transaction took place. These two forms are linked together by a unique trip ticket number. The other two forms serve as receipts for the harvester and the dealer.

TRIP TICKET NUMBER
0013182

FORM NO: OTT-1

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
1141 BAYVIEW AVENUE, SUITE 101
BILOXI, MS 39530



DATE	DEPART TIME	RETURN TIME	CR. GEAR: TYPE & NO.	AREA	REEF	CREW	CHECK STATION	INSP.
FY	LICENSE NUMBER		DOCUMENTATION/REGISTRATION NUMBER			STATE		
REGISTERED TO: LAST NAME				FIRST NAME				
BOAT NAME								
CAPTAIN: LAST NAME				FIRST NAME				
TAG SEQUENCE			PICR			CONTINUATION NO.		
TAG SEQUENCE			PICR			VOID		
TAG SEQUENCE			PICR			VOID		
TAG SEQUENCE			PICR			VOID		
TOTAL SACKS HARVESTED		SHELL RETENTION FEE RECEIVED FROM HARVESTER						
		\$						
SACKS SOLD TO: (DEALER PERMIT NO.)				NO. SOLD		NO. TAKEN HOME		
INSPECTOR SIGNATURE								

NOTE: SHELL RETENTION FEE WILL BE ASSESSED IN ACCORDANCE WITH §49-15-46 MS CODE

Figure 2. Scannable form OTT-1 completed by DMR personnel at oyster check stations.

TRIP TICKET NUMBER 0013182		TO BE COMPLETED BY DEALER					
FORM NO: OTT-2							
VOID NO.	SACKS	\$	SACK PRICE	\$	TOTAL PAID TO HARVESTER	\$	SHELL RETENTION FEES DUE
VOID NO.	SACKS	\$	SACK PRICE	\$	TOTAL PAID TO HARVESTER	\$	SHELL RETENTION FEES DUE
DEALER OR HARVESTER SIGNATURE AND DATE				PERMIT NO. OR LICENSE NO.			
ORIGINAL - DMR							

Figure 3. Scannable trip ticket form OTT-2 completed by seafood dealer.

Oyster trip tickets are scanned with a Canon DR-5020 high-speed scanner tied to a Pentium personal computer running a Windows NT Operating System. The software used to scan the data is Cardiff Teleform Version 6.2, character recognition software. The scanner's software allows a batch scan of 75 trip tickets per minute. To verify scanned information each field has a data validation process and the data is visually cross-referenced from the hardcopy to the screen. The data is downloaded to a Microsoft Structured Query Language (SQL) Version 7.0 multiple user database. In the event of scanner failure, personnel have the ability to manually enter the trip ticket information utilizing a front-end Microsoft Access 2000 entry form. With the institution of the scannable trip ticket, data is entered in a timely manner with fewer data entry personnel (two employees on a part time basis).

Data from the oyster trip tickets is scanned, with few exceptions, the following day. Specialized queries were developed in SQL to track catch, effort and shell retention fees owed to the state by fishermen and dealers. This provides oyster managers with timely data for informed reef management decisions and for bookkeeping purposes. For example, overall catch per unit effort per day (Figure 4) can be graphed with the previous day's harvest information.

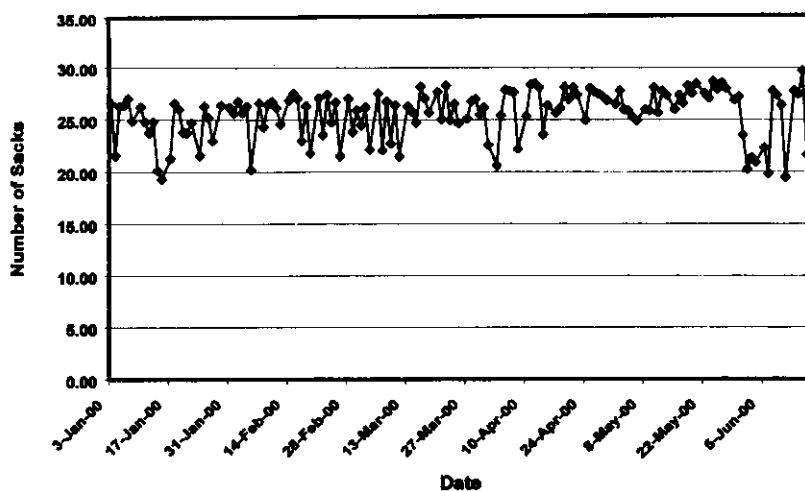


Figure 4. Daily catch per trip for all gear types

PROBLEMS

The development of any new type of data collection and management system will have problems. Most of the problems (i.e., cooperation in completing the form or filling out the form correctly) with Mississippi's oyster trip ticket program are alleviated by virtue of the fact that DMR personnel complete the harvester information portion of the trip ticket (OTT-1) at the check station. While the dealer portion of the trip ticket (OTT-2) is not very long and requires a minimum of information, there have been a number of complaints and compliance problems associated with completing this form. The most common problem is a reluctance to give price information. Although information about the value of a fishery is important and the data will be confidential it is difficult to convince some individuals. They believe that this data may be used against them, either through a competitor obtaining the price information or the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) utilizing the data for tax purposes. Other complaints generally deal with the extra paperwork

involved and the possibility of the dealer having to hire additional manpower to meet the extra workload.

There were some initial problems with the trip ticket itself. Because of time constraints the forms were not developed in Cardiff but with Microsoft Word 2000. This led to a tedious process of getting Cardiff to recognize the individual field placement within the trip ticket. In order to avoid any complications with form development, it is recommended that the forms be developed in the software designed to read them.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The Mississippi oyster trip ticket is currently under modification. Some of the data fields that deal with harvester information, such as harvester name and boat name, are being removed from the trip ticket. This data will be obtained by linking the DMR license database with the trip ticket database. Consequently, the workload of the check station personnel will be reduced.

Trip tickets have been promulgated for the other marine fisheries in the state and are currently under review and refinement. Other future developments include exploring the possibility of electronic transfer of trip ticket information.

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