

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 (NOAA Fisheries Service) and the predecessor agency to the Mexican Secretaría de Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales, y Pesca (SEMARNAP) 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 NOAA Fisheries Service and SEMARNAP to formalize different aspects of the fisheries relationship: (1) MEXUS-Gulf research program, (2) MEXUS-Pacífico research program, and (3) information exchange. The research MOUs have proven highly effective, but NOAA Fisheries Service has been unable to arrange continuing reciprocal exchanges under the information exchange MOU, and it is currently inactive.

Implementing Legislation

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Act), particularly 16 U.S.C. 1822(a), authorizes the negotiation of international fishery agreements to further the purposes, policy, and provisions of the 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 NOAA Fisheries offices. Annual costs of the program including staff time, travel, translation services, and miscellaneous expenses total about \$60,000 annually, during years when Fishery Cooperation Talks (FCTs) occur. This does not include the cost of various working group meetings, such as the annual MEXUS-Gulf and MEXUS-Pacífico meetings or special meetings.

Representation

The annual FCT meetings are coordinated by NOAA Fisheries and Mexico's Subsecretaría de Pesca (PESCA). Both agencies often invite other agencies to participate in the meetings. NOAA Fisheries 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:

NOAA Fisheries 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, 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. Meetings

No FCT meetings occurred from 2001-2003. Recent FCT meetings were held on March 10-11, 2004, in Mazatlan, Sinaloa and on October 13-14, 2005, in La Jolla, California. The Mexican delegations included officials from National Aquaculture and Fisheries (CONAPESCA), the National Fisheries Institute (INF), and the Secretariats of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries, and Food (SAGARPA), Foreign Relations (SRE), and Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT). The U.S. delegations included officials from the NMFS, U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Coast Guard.. The delegations discussed sustainable fisheries management, the protection and conservation of species such as dolphins and sea turtles, fisheries-related trade issues, enforcement cooperation, aquaculture, collaborative scientific research in the framework of the MEXUS-Gulf and MEXUS-Pacific bilateral agreements, and the participation of the two countries in fisheries-related international organizations. Parties agreed to exchange information and to work together in these areas. No FCT meeting occurred in 2006 or 2007, but meetings may be planned for 2008.

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