**Extract from the Fisheries-Independent Monitoring Program 2015 Annual Data Summary Report for background information.**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Fish and Wildlife Research Institute’s (FWRI) Fisheries-Independent Monitoring (FIM) program is a long-term program designed to monitor the relative abundance of fishery resources in Florida’s major estuarine, coastal, and reef systems. The program was developed to: 1) address the critical need for effective assessment techniques for an array of species and sizes of fishes and selected invertebrates; 2) provide timely information for use in management plans; and 3) monitor trends in the relative abundance of taxa in a variety of estuarine and marine systems throughout Florida.

The FIM program uses a stratified-random sampling design in all study areas. Each study area was divided into sampling zones based upon geographic and logistical criteria, and each zone was further subdivided into 1-nm2 (nautical mile) grids that were randomly selected for sampling. Sampling grids were stratified by habitat and depth, thereby identifying the gear types that could be used in those areas. A single sample was collected at each randomly selected site. In most cases, the number of monthly samples collected in each zone with each gear was proportional to the number of grids in the zone that could be sampled with a particular gear.

The FIM program uses a multi-gear approach to collect data on various life history stages of fishes and selected invertebrates from a wide variety of habitats. A 21.3-m center bag seine targeted YOY and juvenile fishes in shallow water (≤1.8-m); a 6.1-m otter trawl targeted YOY, juvenile, and adult fish in deep water (1.0–7.6-m); a 183-m haul seine targeted sub-adult and adult fish along shorelines in water depths ≤2.5-m. All sampling was conducted during daytime hours (one hour after sunrise to one hour before sunset). Additional sampling details are described in the FIM program’s Procedure Manual (FWC-FWRI 2015).

Environmental data consisting of water chemistry, habitat characteristics, and physical parameters such as current and tidal conditions were recorded for each sample. All fish and selected invertebrate species captured were identified to the lowest practical taxonomic level, counted, and a random sample of at least 10 individuals were measured (standard length for teleosts, precaudal length for sharks, disc width for rays, carapace width for crabs, and post-orbital head length for shrimp). A detailed explanation of the standard sample work-up for data collection is described in the FIM program’s Procedure Manual (FWC-FWRI 2015).

The dataset is a simplified / condensed version of the survey data from Tampa Bay, focusing on horseshoe crabs as a species of interest. It has survey information (date, startdepth, zone, gear used, effort, number of horseshoe crabs identified), habitat data (bottom type, bottom vegetation, shore type) and water quality data (temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, etc). The metadata file gives information on the variables and their codes. The map shows where the zones are located.