distribution and abundance have been conducted for the early life-stages of many sciaenids, but little is known about the early life history of young *Menticirrhus* species. The purpose of this study is to determine the spatial distribution and abundance of young *Menticirrhus* species in coastal Mississippi. Specific habitats included barrier island surf zones and grass beds, and mainland marsh-edges and sandy shorelines. Five hundred sixty-seven *Menticirrhus* were collected during this study, with over 85% of the specimens collected in 2006. Densities of both *M. americanus* and *M. littoralis* peaked during summer, while densities of *M. saxatilis* peaked in spring. All three kingfish species co-occurred within surf zone and sandy shoreline habitats, but *M. americanus* were the dominant kingfish along protected sandy shorelines, and *M. littoralis* were the dominant kingfish along open surf zones. Only *M. americanus* was collected from marsh-edges, and all three species were absent from grass beds. Length-frequency distributions of all three kingfish indicated accelerated growth with increasing size and warmer water temperatures.

**The Effect of Seascape Structure on the Spatial Distribution of Juvenile Fish within Benner Bay Mangrove Lagoon, St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands (USVI)**

KEY WORDS: Seascape structure, mangroves, seagrass, spatial scale, Caribbean

**El Efecto de la Estructura de Marina Sobre la Distribución Espacial de Juveniles dentro de Benner Laguna Mangrove Bay,**

*St. Thomas, Islas Vírgenes De Los Estados Unidos (Islas Virgenes)*

PALABRAS CLAVE: Estructura de marina, mangrove, distribución espacial, Caribe

**L’Effet de la Structure Seascape sur la Répartition Spatiale des Juvéniles à l’Intérieur de la Lagune de la Baie Benner Mangrove,**

*St. Thomas, Îles Vierges Américaines (Îles Vierges Américaines)*

MOTS CLÉS: Structure seascape, mangliers, répartition spatiale, Caraïbe

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**ABSTRACT**

Coastal mangroves in the Caribbean are typically connected to adjacent habitat types through the movements of fish. Understanding the distribution of fish in mangroves therefore requires consideration of the surrounding seascape. This research adopts a multiscale seascape approach to examine the spatial distribution of juvenile fish in a mangrove lined bay in the U.S. Virgin Islands. We sampled fish from the mangrove fringe using fish traps at 12 random locations. The seascape was mapped for the entire bay from high resolution aerial photography and field validation. Seascape composition was quantified from the habitat map at a range of scales surrounding each sample location using geographical information system tools. Within the bay, the site-to-site differences in the amount of mangrove were insignificant. Instead, structurally heterogeneous seascapes containing mangroves with adjacent dense seagrass and macroalgae in close proximity to coral reefs had significantly higher fish species richness and abundance of juvenile fish. Lowest richness and abundance were characteristic of mangroves with low seagrass cover in adjacent areas and high cyanobacterial cover associated with the inner bay. Similarly, juvenile *Haemulon flavolineatum* (French grunt), *Ocyurus chrysurus* (yellowtail snapper) and *Lutjanus apodus* (schoolmaster snapper) were most abundant at mangrove fringe with a high percent cover of macroalgae (~40%) and seagrass (~10%) proximal to coral reefs than in seascapes dominated by cyanobacteria. In contrast, *Eucinostomus melanopterus* (flagfin mojarra) and *Spheroides testudineus* (checkered puffer) were more abundant in seascapes with high cyanobacteria cover and low macroalgal and seagrass cover, farthest from coral reef.