

**Summary of the Mackerel Committee
October 20, 2014
Renaissance Battle House
Moonlight Ballroom
Mobile, Alabama**

Committee members present:

Pam Dana, *Chair*
Roy Williams, *V. Chair*
Kevin Anson
Phil Steele
Myron Fischer
Corky Perret
Robin Riechers
John Sanchez
Martha Bademan

Dr. Dana opened the meeting. The agenda (**Tab C, No. 1**) and the minutes (**Tab C, No. 2**) from the June 23, 2014, meeting were approved as written.

CMP Framework Amendment 2

Staff reviewed the South Atlantic Council's preferred alternative for the sole action in CMP Framework Amendment 2 (**Tab C, No. 4a**) and the accompanying codified text (**Tab C, No. 4b**). The committee asked what impact the setting of trip limits in the Southern Zone for Atlantic migratory group Spanish Mackerel would have on the Gulf migratory group and Gulf fishermen, to which staff replied that no impacts are anticipated. Southeast Regional Office staff noted that the need for Framework Amendment 2, and the creation of the Southern Zone for Spanish Mackerel in the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction, were a result of measures approved by both Councils in CMP Amendment 20B.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, to recommend that Council select Preferred Alternative 4: Establish a trip limit of 3,500 lbs for the Southern Zone. When 75% of adjusted Southern Zone quota is met or projected to be met, the trip limit would be reduced to 1,500 lbs. When 100% of adjusted Southern Zone quota is met or projected to be met, the trip limit is reduced to 500 lbs until the end of the fishing year or until the Southern Zone commercial quota is met or projected to be met, at which time the commercial sector in the Southern Zone would be closed to harvest of Spanish mackerel. *75% of the current adjusted Southern Zone quota = 1,692,848 lbs *100% of the current adjusted Southern Zone quota = 2,257,130 lbs, be the preferred alternative.

Motion carried with no opposition.

The Committee subsequently recommended that the Council take final action on Framework Amendment 2:

The Committee recommends, and I so move, to recommend to the Council that Framework Amendment 2 be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for implementation and that the regulations be deemed as necessary and appropriate, and that staff be given editorial license to make the necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate.

Motion carried with no opposition.

King Mackerel Gill Net Fishery Issues

Staff reviewed concerns presented by king mackerel gill net fishery permit holders (**Tab C, No. 5**). The industry is asking the Council to consider raising the current trip limit from 25,000 lbs to 45,000 lbs, under the premise that they think it will allow them to more efficiently prosecute the fishery without harming the stock. To account for the increase in the trip limit, the industry has proposed accountability measures which would reduce the current and following year's quotas by the amount of each individual overage over the proposed trip limit. Industry comments in support of the change argue that they are currently enduring excessive fines for honestly reporting their overages, and that they are having to cut nets when they think they might have more than the 25,000 lb trip limit. Southeast Regional Office staff noted that using the information provided by the survey sent out to the majority of the active permit holders, it would be possible to land the current quota for the gill net fishery in the Southern Subzone in a single day. This would make closing the fishery ahead of an overage impossible, since it would be likely that there could be permitted boats offshore with fish on board after the quota had been met.

Committee members asked why gillnet fishermen had not considered shorter nets or larger mesh sizes to control landing weights, which can be difficult to estimate while at sea. Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQs) were offered as a great solution for this fishery, and since there are so few participants (~17 permits with annual landings), the fishery should be easy to work with under such a management scheme. Past issues with trip limits and permits in the Southern Subzone were recalled, prompting Committee members to ask what the impact of such a trip limit increase could do to the economics of the fishery. Southeast Regional Office staff replied that it is unlikely that the price could get much lower than it normally is around the time that the gill net fishery opens on the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday.

Committee members debated whether it would be best to ask for input from the CMP Advisory Panel or the fishermen directly. Council staff pointed out that since there are no gill net permit

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holders on the CMP AP, it might not be appropriate to solicit that body for input on this specific issue at this time. Committee members instead supported going to the fishermen and directly soliciting their input, in a workshop-style setting, to determine what other options may be suitable to alleviate their current concerns. Staff could then begin putting these ideas together in a scoping document for both Councils to review. It was noted that the Joint South Florida Management Committee meeting is currently scheduled to occur in January 2015 in Key West, providing an advantageous location and timeframe in which to hold such a public workshop.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, to recommend that the Council conduct a public workshop for the king mackerel gillnet fishery in coordination with the South Florida Committee meeting during the week of January 12th, 2015.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Dr. Dana asked the Committee if there was any other business requiring discussion and, hearing none, adjourned the Mackerel Committee.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my report.