

Amendment 26
(Separate Permits)
to the Fishery Management Plan for
the Coastal Migratory Pelagic
Resources in the Gulf of Mexico and
Atlantic Region



December 2013

Background

Currently the federal commercial king mackerel and Spanish mackerel permits are valid for commercial harvest of the respective species in both the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic. There are vessels that travel and fish in both regions, and some vessels that fish only in specific areas. The South Atlantic Council is concerned with effort in the East Coast Florida subzone, but other areas in the Gulf and Atlantic regions may not have issues with the number of active permits. Some historical king mackerel fishermen are concerned that permit holders who have not been fishing regularly or fishing at low levels may begin participating more fully. More vessels fishing under the same quota could mean lower catches for each vessel. On the other hand, many king mackerel fishermen diversify and harvest species from multiple fisheries. Although they may be considered “part-time” king mackerel fishermen, king mackerel may contribute a large portion of their income. The migratory nature of the fish promotes this part-time participation for those who do not want to travel long distances. Thus, elimination of permits with low levels of landings could eliminate full-time fishermen that are only part-time king mackerel fishermen because of their diversification. In Joint Amendment 20A, the Councils considered ways to remove inactive permits, but public comments indicated that fishermen in most areas in the regions did not feel that latent effort was a problem or would impact the stock.

Establishing criteria for future permits would be difficult because historically, some vessels from the Atlantic have fished on the Gulf group king mackerel quota, particularly in the Western Zone and the Northern Subzone of the Eastern Zone off Florida. Additionally, there are different seasons in the Gulf and Atlantic, and different zones that have different trip limits. Consequently, setting qualifications based on landings is biased by region because management may not allow fishermen to participate at the same level in different places.

Another way to restrict participation would be to require endorsements for different regions. This option was explored for the Gulf zones in Amendment 20B, but was moved to the considered but rejected section. The Gulf Council determined the establishment of endorsements would increase the monitoring and enforcement burden tremendously. However, the South Atlantic Council may explore the idea for their region.

This amendment considers ways to reduce participation in overcapitalized regions and would include actions to separate the commercial permits for king mackerel and Spanish mackerel into one permit for each species in each region (Gulf king mackerel, Atlantic king mackerel, Gulf Spanish mackerel, Atlantic Spanish mackerel).

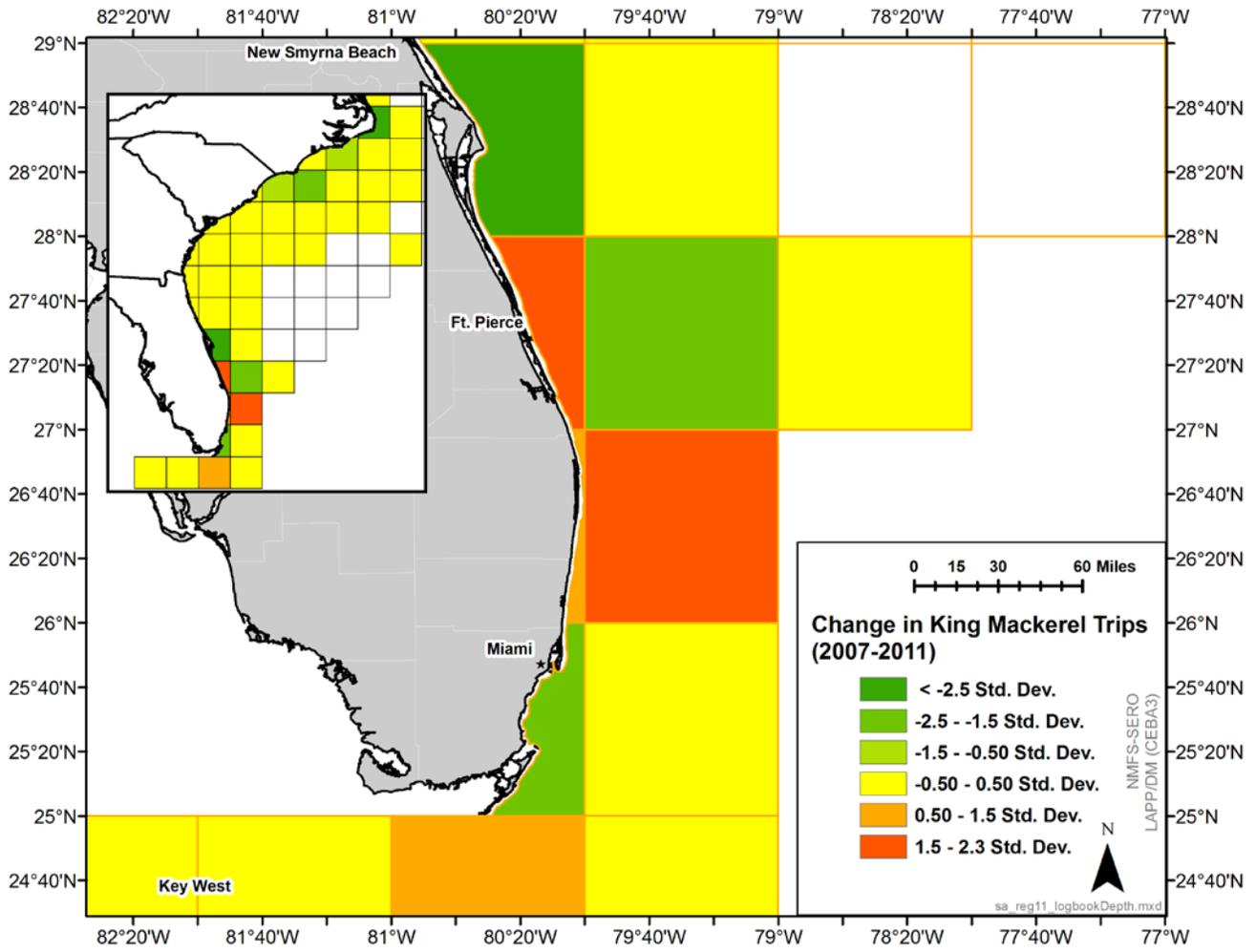


Figure 1. Change in commercial king mackerel trips (all gear types) between 2007 and 2011. Green indicates an overall decrease in the number of KM trips; yellow indicates relative stability; and red indicates an overall increase in the number of KM trips. Analysis and graphic by Nick Farmer, SERO, using Logbook data.

Possible Items in Joint CMP Amendment 26

1. Modify the federal commercial king mackerel permit system.
 - Eliminate the current commercial king mackerel permit.
 - Create a Gulf commercial king mackerel permit.
 - Eligibility requirements
 - Harvest requirements and restrictions
 - Create an Atlantic commercial king mackerel permit.
 - Eligibility requirements
 - Harvest requirements and restrictions

2. Modify the federal commercial Spanish mackerel permit system.
 - Eliminate the current commercial Spanish mackerel permit.
 - Create a Gulf commercial Spanish mackerel permit (limited entry or open access?).
 - Eligibility requirements
 - Harvest requirements and restrictions
 - Create an Atlantic commercial Spanish mackerel permit (limited entry or open access?).
 - Eligibility requirements
 - Harvest requirements and restrictions
 - Harvest in state waters?

3. Establish an endorsement for commercial harvest of king mackerel in the East Coast Florida subzone or other subzones.
 - Require a limited entry endorsement for the East Coast Florida subzone

Possible Timeline

- South Atlantic Council provides guidance at December 2013 meeting and approves for scoping
- South Atlantic Scoping meetings Jan 2014
- Gulf Council provides guidance at January 2013 meeting and approves for scoping
- Gulf Scoping meetings February 2014
- Councils review public input at March/April 2014 meetings and provide guidance
- Mackerel APs review in April/May 2014
- SSC/SEP review in April 2014
- Approve for public hearings at June 2014 meetings
- Public hearings August 2014
- Approve for submission in September/October 2014
- Regulations implemented in 2015

Proposed Purpose and Need

The *purpose* of Amendment 26 is to separate the federal commercial permits for king mackerel and Spanish mackerel into permits for each region.

The *need* for action in Amendment 26 is to allow the Gulf Council and South Atlantic Council to more effectively manage commercial participation in the respective regions, and make changes to participation that will not unnecessarily affect the other region.

Considerations for Developing Actions and Alternatives

The proposed actions and alternatives should be developed to meet the purpose and need. Each action would contain a range of alternatives, including the no action (the current regulations).

Before any actions and alternatives are developed, the Councils need to provide further guidance based on the criteria below.

King Mackerel Permits

1) Do you want to create separate Gulf and Atlantic king mackerel commercial permits? Discuss rationale.

2) What about valid permits with no landings?

Data from CMP 20A, Action 2:

- 167 (out of 1,499) permits with zero landings of KM from 2006-2011 seasons
 - 53 East Coast FL and the FL Keys
 - 1 Georgia
 - 3 South Carolina
 - 19 North Carolina
 - 36 West Coast FL (not including Keys)
 - 34 AL/MS/LA/TX
- 58 permits with zero landings of KM from 1998-2011 seasons

3) To consider:

- Eligibility requirements to receive in each region?
- Control date published?
- Permit reduction?
- Can an individual be eligible to receive permits for both regions?
- Transferable/non-transferable or Limited/Unlimited permits (similar to Snapper Grouper)?
- Two-for-one requirement for new entrants?
- Endorsement for East Coast Florida subzone (Nov- March) or other areas?
- Endorsement for specific areas? Designated zones for the Gulf- considered but removed from Amendment 20B

Spanish Mackerel Permits

1) Do you want to create separate Gulf and Atlantic king mackerel commercial permits? Discuss rationale.

2) Open access permit- no landings history on an annual permit

3) To consider:

- Change to a limited entry or keep open access?
- Eligibility requirements?
- Control date published?
- Can an individual be eligible to receive permits for both regions?
- Transferable/non-transferable or Limited/Unlimited permits (similar to Snapper Grouper)?
- Two-for-one requirement for new entrants?
- Endorsement for gillnets or specific areas?
- Commercial harvest in state waters?

Endorsements

1) Which regions?

2) Eligibility requirements?

3) How many endorsements can a vessel hold (if more than one are established)?