

**FINAL**  
**SUMMARY REPORT**  
**MACKEREL COBIA COMMITTEE**  
**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**Charleston, South Carolina**  
**September 15, 2022**

The Committee approved minutes from the March 2022 meeting and the agenda.

**Update on amendments recently submitted to NMFS**

At the December 2021 meeting, the Council approved CMP Amendment 32 (Gulf cobia catch levels and management measures) for formal review. The Gulf Council approved CMP Amendment 32 for final action at their October 2021 meeting. The document was transmitted to NMFS on February 18, 2022, and the proposed rule published on July 7, 2022. At the March 2022 meeting the Council approved CMP Amendment 34 (Atlantic king mackerel catch levels and management measures) for formal review. The document was transmitted to NMFS on August 5, 2022.

**CMP Amendment 33 – Updates to Gulf king mackerel management based on SEDAR 38 Update 2020**

Matt Freeman, Gulf Council staff, presented draft options to be considered in Amendment 33, which proposes modifications to catch limits and sector allocations for Gulf king mackerel based on the results of the SEDAR 38 Update stock assessment. The stock assessment found that Gulf king mackerel was not overfished or undergoing overfishing. However, recruitment has been low over the last 10 years, and the spawning stock biomass (SSB) is below the SSB at maximum sustainable yield. The Committee reviewed the CMP FMP goals and objectives, the proposed action and alternatives, and actions taken by the Gulf Council during their June 2022 meeting.

The following motions were approved:

**MOTION 1: ADD THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE TO THE JOINT CMP FMP OBJECTIVES: TO ACHIEVE ROBUST FISHERY REPORTING AND DATA COLLECTION SYSTEMS ACROSS ALL SECTORS FOR MONITORING THE COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGIC FISHERY WHICH MINIMIZES SCIENTIFIC, MANAGEMENT, AND RISK UNCERTAINTY.**

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**MOTION 2: REMOVE CURRENT OBJECTIVE 3 FROM THE CMP FMP OBJECTIVES.**

Objective 3: To provide necessary information for effective management and establish a mandatory reporting system for monitoring catch.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**MOTION 3: AMEND THE LANGUAGE OF OBJECTIVE 1 TO READ AS FOLLOWS:**

Objective 1 reads as follows: The primary objective of this FMP is to **ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN OPTIMUM** yield ~~at the maximum sustainable yield (MSY)~~, **TO** allow recovery of overfished populations, and maintain population levels sufficient to ensure adequate recruitment.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Management Overview**

Staff presented an overview of management concerns that have arisen in the Spanish mackerel fishery since 2018 to provide context for the Council when discussing the SEDAR 78: Atlantic Spanish mackerel stock assessment.

**SEDAR 78: Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Assessment**

SEDAR 78 was completed in July 2022 and included an assessment for Atlantic Spanish mackerel. In August 2022, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the results of the updated SEDAR 78 and recommended additional work completed. Shannon Cass-Calay presented the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) report and SSC Chair, Jeff Buckel, presented the SSC recommendations to the Committee. Council staff presented an overview of the Atlantic Spanish mackerel fishery.

The SEFSC will rerun the SEDAR 78 assessment model with new landings to address uncertainty with MRIP estimate in the terminal year. The SSC will review the changes at their upcoming October 2022 meeting and determine whether the changes were sufficient to address their cited concerns or if additional changes are needed. If additional changes are substantial, a research track assessment would be needed for Atlantic Spanish mackerel.

**Given continuing closures in the commercial sectors, does the Council wish to apply the allocation decision tool to Spanish mackerel at the December 2022 meeting?**

**DIRECTION TO STAFF: PROCEED WITH APPLICATION OF ALLOCATION DECISION TOOL TO THE SPANISH MACKEREL FISHERY FOR BOTH SECTOR AND REGIONAL ALLOCATION TO BE DISCUSSED IN DECEMBER 2022**

**Topics for the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel**

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel is scheduled to convene on October 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022 in Charleston, South Carolina. Below is a list of approved topics for the AP's agenda:

- Update on amendments recently submitted.
- SEDAR 78: Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Stock Assessment
  - Update on stock assessment revisions.
  - Discussion of increased recreational shore-based landings and overall increase in recreational effort during the COVID19 pandemic.
  - Discussion of commercial trips limits and how the lower trip limit (500-pounds) has affected market price for Spanish mackerel.
- Discussion of the current false albacore (little tunny) fishery.
  - Have there been substantial changes in fishing behavior and catch levels for false albacore over the last five years?

- How have social and economic influences (ex. price and demand, infrastructure, community dependence) affected the false albacore fishery?
- What factors should the Council consider when determining whether or not false albacore are in need of conservation and management?
- What else is important for the Council to know about false albacore?
- Review of CMP FMP Goals and Objectives
- Discussion of CMP Amendment 33 and how increased Gulf king mackerel commercial allocation may impact market price of Atlantic king mackerel.
- Commercial electronic logbook
- NOAA North Atlantic Right Whales Proposed Vessel Speed Regulations
- Hudson Canyon National Marine Sanctuary Proposal
- Update Fishery Performance Reports for Atlantic king mackerel and FLEC cobia.
- Other Updates: Citizen Science, SEDAR, Climate Change Scenario Planning

**Other Business**

On September 19, 2022, the Council received a letter from the American Saltwater Guides Association requesting the consider re-adding false albacore to the CMP FMP. The Committee provided the following direction to staff:

- DEVELOP A WHITE PAPER EXAMINING IF FALSE ALBACORE MEET THE MSA CRITERIA FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT AND DISCUSS WITH THE AP.
  - WORK WITH NC DMF STAFF
  - LOOK AT STATE VS. FEDERAL LANDINGS

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 Note: Council staff drafts the timing and task motion based on Committee action. If points require clarification, they will be added to the draft motion. The Committee should review this wording carefully to be sure it accurately reflects their intent prior to making the motion.

**Timing and Task(s)**

**MOTION 4: ADOPT THE FOLLOWING TIMING AND TASKS:**

1. Work with Gulf Council staff, as needed, to continue work on Coastal Migratory Pelagics Amendment 33.
2. Add a review of the revised SEDAR 78 stock assessment to the SSC’s October 2022 meeting agenda.
3. Convene a meeting of the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel to discuss the agenda items as listed above in October 2022.
4. Develop a white paper that examines false albacore relative to the ten criteria outlined in the Magnuson-Stevens act to determine if they may be in need of conservation and management.
5. Prepare the allocation decision tool for Atlantic Spanish mackerel to be reviewed at the December 2022 meeting.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL