

**Mackerel Committee Report
October 17, 2016
Pam Dana – Chair**

CMP Amendment 30

Staff reviewed the purpose and need of CMP 30, which is to change the recreational fishing season for Atlantic cobia north of the Florida/Georgia state line. CMP 30 does not affect the Gulf migratory group of cobia. The recreational ACL for Atlantic cobia was exceeded in 2015 and the South Atlantic Council is considering several measures to ensure that the fishing season remains open during the most popular time of year (May – September). The South Atlantic Council has selected Alternative 2 as their preferred alternative, and has recommended that the document be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for implementation.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 1, to make Alternative 2 the preferred alternative.

Alternative 2: Modify the recreational fishing year for Atlantic cobia to be May 1 through April 30.

Motion carried with no opposition.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, to approve CMP Amendment 30 and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation, and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff 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.

CMP Framework Amendment 5

Staff reviewed the purpose and need of CMP Framework Amendment 5, which is to modify restrictions applicable to federal commercial permits for king and Spanish mackerel. This amendment will allow commercial fishermen to recreationally fish for king and Spanish mackerel on their commercially permitted vessels when the commercial season is closed, and would apply in both the Gulf and the South Atlantic. The Councils have selected the same preferred alternatives, and the South Atlantic Council has recommended that the document be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for implementation.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, to approve CMP Framework Amendment 5 and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation, and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff 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.

CMP Amendment 29

Staff reviewed the purpose and need for CMP 29, which addresses Gulf king mackerel allocation sharing and a recreational accountability measure.

Action 1

Staff reviewed Action 1, which examines options for allocation sharing strategies between the recreational and commercial sectors for Gulf king mackerel. Committee members asked why two year old data would be used in Alternative 2, if the following year, which constitutes preliminary data, would also determine whether a conditional transfer would occur. Staff replied that the use of two year old data would result in the consideration of both validated and preliminary landings data prior to any allocation sharing, thereby providing more confidence in any resulting decision. From a timeliness perspective, Alternative 2 is predicted to move more quickly than Alternative 3. Staff noted that transfers are only for one year, and are therefore not cumulative across fishing years. A Committee member was concerned about the risk of removing fish that have historically acted as a buffer. Another Committee member replied that there were already buffers in place to protect the stock.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 1, to make Alternative 2, Options 2b and 2g the preferred alternative.

Alternative 2: Conditionally transfer a certain percentage of the allocation to the commercial sector in the next fishing year, if the minimum recreational landings threshold is not met. If the commercial sector does not land at least 90% of its ACL, this transfer will not occur. Landings data from two years prior will be used to determine allocation transfers.

Conditional Quota Transfer (MUST CHOOSE ONE):

Option 2b: Conditionally transfer 10% from the stock allocation to the commercial allocation.

Recreational ACL Minimum Threshold (MUST CHOOSE ONE), if the recreational sector landings are:

Option 2g: less than 75% of its ACL.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Action 2

Staff reviewed the proposed modifications to the recreational accountability measures (AMs) for king mackerel. Because of the Council's desire to keep the recreational sector open year round, the Council is considering changing the current in-season AM to a post-season AM. The change to a post-season AM allows for the safeguards built into Action 1 in CMP 29 to return any shared allocation to the recreational sector before the AM is applied, thereby safeguarding the current year round recreational season from any risks related to an allocation sharing strategy. A Committee member thought that the recreational sector would be penalized for exceeding their sector ACL in a fishing year under the proposed alternatives. Another committee member clarified that no such penalty would occur- by delaying the AM until the following season, the recreational ACL would return to its pre-allocation sharing level. Staff were directed to provide examples of how the AMs would work (see attachment).

The Committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 2, to make Alternative 3 the preferred alternative.

Alternative 3: Replace the current in-season AM with a post-season AM. If both the recreational ACL *and* the stock ACL are exceeded in a fishing year, the length of the following recreational fishing season will be reduced by the amount necessary to ensure the landings do not exceed the recreational ACL.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Staff recommended that the Committee reconsider going to Brownsville, TX during public hearings for CMP 29. The Committee directed staff to remove Brownsville, TX from the list of public hearing locations for this amendment.

King Mackerel Projections Update

Dr. Joe Powers summarized the presentation reviewed by the SSC for updating the yield projections for Gulf king mackerel. The SSC had many specific questions regarding the update, especially with respect to which data were used, what was updated, and whether the condition of the surplus biomass had changed. The SSC was ultimately not willing to consider modifying the Gulf king mackerel ABC until it received clarification on the noted issues with the projections. They also noted that changing the ABC mid-way through a projection is always going to be problematic, especially when using preliminary data. The SSC expects to discuss the projections again at their next meeting.

Madam Chair, this concludes my report.