

Framework Amendment 8 to the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources in the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Region



(King Mackerel Trip Limits)

Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Summary

Background

The new regulations for king mackerel established in Amendment 26 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Coastal Migratory Pelagic (CMP) Resources in the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Regions (Amendment 26) became effective on May 11, 2017, including updated commercial trip limits for the Atlantic Southern zone. Each Atlantic Southern Zone season has a quota and specified trip limits (**Figure 1**):

North of the Flagler/Volusia line (29°25'N): 3,500 pounds year-round.

South of the Flagler/Volusia line (29°25'N) to the Miami-Dade/Monroe line (25°20'24"N):

- *March 1 – March 31 (Season 1):* 50-fish
- *April 1 – September 30 (Season 1):* 75-fish, unless NMFS determines that 75% or more of the Season 1 quota has been landed, then, 50-fish
- *October 1 – January 31 (Season 2):* 50-fish
- *February 1 – end of February (Season 2):* 50-fish, unless NMFS determines that less than 70% of the Season 2 quota has been landed, then, 75-fish.

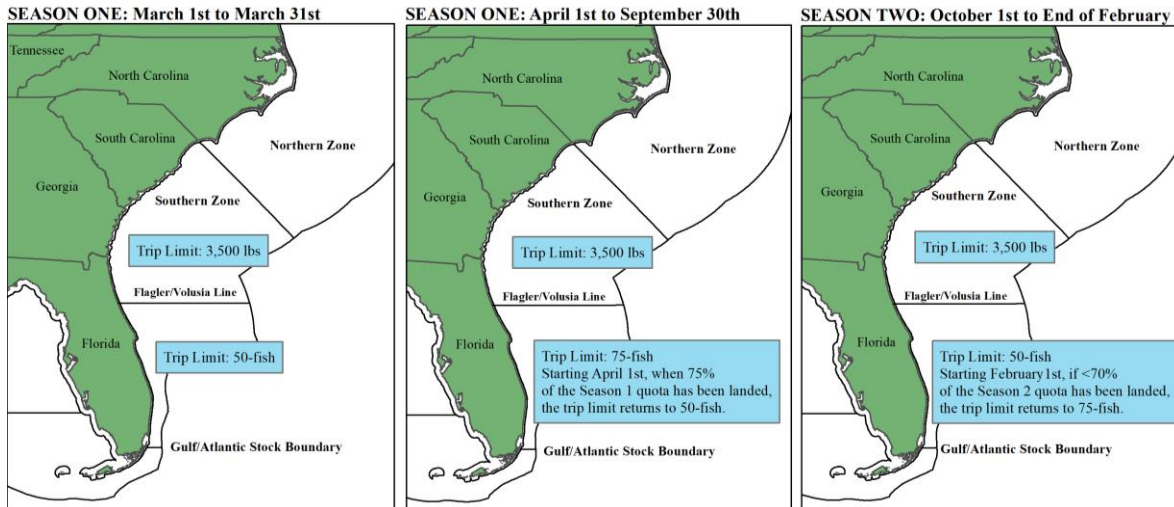


Figure 1. Commercial trip limits for king mackerel in the Atlantic Southern Zone as established in CMP Amendment 26.

Prior to implementation of Amendment 26, the commercial king mackerel trip limits for the Atlantic Southern Zone were as follows (**Figure 2**):

North of the Flagler/Volusia line (29°25'N): 3,500 pounds year-round.

South of the Flagler/Volusia line (29°25'N) to the Volusia/Brevard line (28°47.8'N):

- *April 1 – October 31*: 3,500 pounds
- *November 1 – March 31*: No trip limit

South of the Volusia/Brevard line (28°47.8'N) to the Miami-Dade/Monroe line (25°20'24"N):

- *April 1 – October 31*: 75-fish
- *November – March 31*: No trip limit

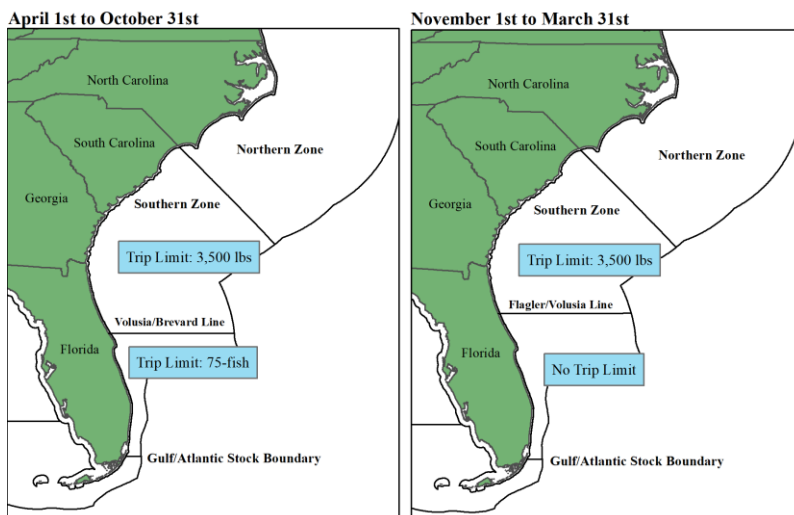


Figure 2. Commercial king mackerel trip limits in place in the Atlantic Southern Zone prior to implementation of Amendment 26.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) chose to modify the commercial trip limit system for king mackerel in the Atlantic Southern Zone in Amendment 26 to ensure that the commercial fishery was open year-round. Fishermen operating along the east coast of Florida indicated the importance of providing year-round access to king mackerel for fishermen and communities that harvest the fish at various times throughout the year. However, fishermen on the Florida east coast have also expressed concern about the new trip limits. Framework Amendment 6 to the CMP FMP addressed concerns related to low trips limits in Season 1 (March 1 through September 30) in the EEZ from the Flagler/Volusia County line to the Volusia/Brevard County line (Volusia County). If approved by the Secretary of Commerce, commercial king mackerel trip limits will be modified as followed (**Figure 3**):

North of the Flagler/Volusia line (29°25'N): 3,500 pounds year-round.

South of the Flagler/Volusia line (29°25'N) to the Volusia/Brevard line (28°47.8' N):

- March 1 – March 31 (Season 1): 75-fish
- April 1 – September 30 (Season 1): 3,500 pounds
- October 1 – January 31 (Season 2): 50-fish
- February 1 – end of February (Season 2): 50-fish, unless NMFS determines that less than 70% of the Season 2 quota has been landed, then, 75-fish.

South of the Volusia/Brevard line (28°47.8'N) to the Miami-Dade/Monroe line (25°20'24"N):

- March 1 – March 31 (Season 1): 75-fish
- April 1 – September 30 (Season 1): 75-fish, unless NMFS determines that 75% or more of the Season 1 quota has been landed, then, 50-fish
- October 1 – January 31 (Season 2): 50-fish
- February 1 – end of February (Season 2): 50-fish, unless NMFS determines that less than 70% of the Season 2 quota has been landed, then, 75-fish.

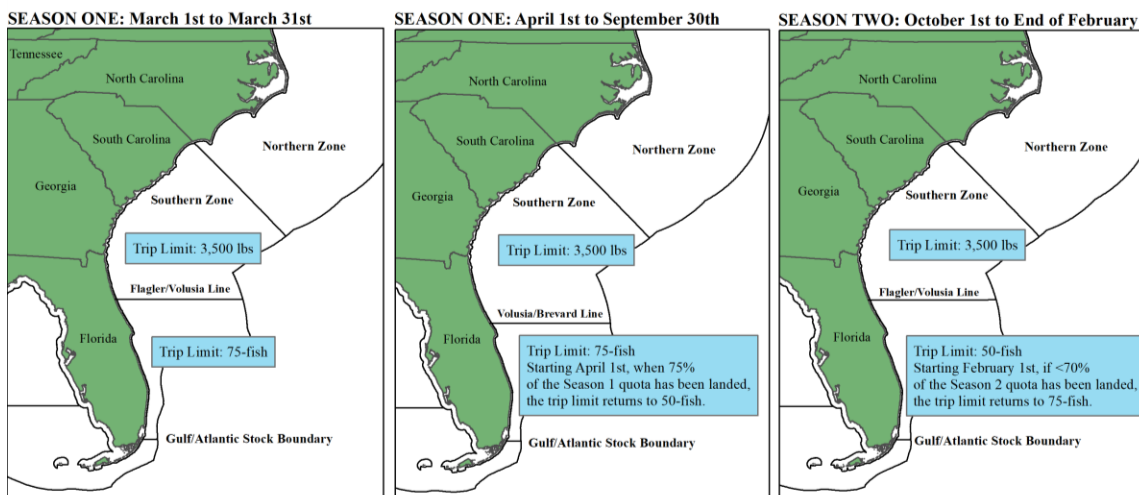


Figure 3. Commercial king mackerel trip limits in place upon approval and implementation of CMP Framework Amendment 6.

Stakeholders and the South Atlantic Council’s Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (MCAP) have also recommended that the South Atlantic Council review the trip limits during Season 2 (October 1st through the end of February). During these winter months, the weather makes it challenging for fishermen to get out on the water. Additionally, during the winter months mackerel fishermen in the Atlantic are competing with mackerel fishermen in the Gulf. More fish on the market this time of year results in lower prices, making it even more challenging to make a profitable trip. When the weather is decent, MCAP members feel it would be helpful if fishermen had access to a higher trip limit to make trips worthwhile.

Council Action

MOTION: BEGIN A FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT TO ADDRESS ATLANTIC KING MACKEREL COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMITS IN THE SOUTHERN ZONE DURING SEASON 2.
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

The Council has requested the MCAP comment on commercial king mackerel trip limit options that should be considered in the framework amendment.

Table 1. Possible timing from CMP Framework Amendment 8

Process Step		Date
✓	Council directs staff to start work on a framework amendment.	March 2019
	Council reviews options paper and approves amendment for scoping.	June 2019
	Scoping	Summer 2019
	Council reviews scoping comments and actions/alternatives to be analyzed.	September 2019
	Council reviews the draft amendment, selects preferred alternative, modifies the document as necessary, approves for public hearings.	December 2019
	Public hearings	Winter 2020
	Council takes final action on CMP Framework Amendment 6.	March 2020
	CMP Framework Amendment 6 transmitted for Secretarial Review.	Spring 2020
	Implementation	Summer 2020

Previous Input on King Mackerel Trip Limits

Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Meeting – April 2018:

MOTION: REQUEST THE COUNCIL CONSIDER A 600-LB TRIP LIMIT FOR KING MACKEREL IN THE SOUTHERN ZONE SOUTH OF FLAGLER/VOLUSIA.
APPROVED BY AP (UNANIMOUS)

Council Meeting Public Comment – March 2019:

- Allow a 75-fish or 500-lbs trip limit south of the Flagler/Volusia County Line, Florida.
- Allow a 600-pound trip limit in the southern zone during season two.
- Allow a 1250-lbs trip limit for the entire state of Florida. The trip limit should never be less than 750-lbs.
- Allow a 100-fish or 1250-lbs, whichever comes first, trip limit year-round.
- Consider including a step-down during season two.

Additional Information

- Commercial Atlantic king mackerel regulations are as follows (**Table 2**):

Table 2. Current regulations for the Atlantic king mackerel commercial fishery.

Zones	Northern Zone (NY/CT/RI state line to the NC/SC state line) Southern Zone (NC/SC state line to the Miami-Dade/Monroe County Line, Florida)	
Allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial Total: 37.1% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Zone: 23.04% Southern Zone: 76.96% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Season 1 (March 1st to September 30th): 60% Season 2 (October 1st to the end of February): 40% 	
Season	March 1 st to the end of February	
Annual Catch Limit	2018/2019 Season	2019/2020 Season+
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial Total: 5,200,000 pounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Zone: 1,198,080 pounds Southern Zone: 4,001,920 pounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Season 1: 2,401,152 pounds Season 2: 1,600,768 pounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial Total: 4,700,000 pounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Zone: 1,082,880 pounds Southern Zone: 3,617,120 pounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Season 1: 2,170,272 pounds Season 2: 1,446,848 pounds
Trip/Bag Limit	Northern Zone: 3,500 pounds year-round	
	Southern Zone:	
	▪ Season 1 (Current)	▪ Season 1 (CMP Framework 6)
	<i>North of Flagler/Volusia:</i> 3,500 pounds. <i>South of Flagler/Volusia:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March: 50-fish April through September: 75-fish (reduced to 50-fish once 75% of season one quota reached) 	<i>North of Flagler/Volusia:</i> 3,500 pounds <i>Flagler/Volusia to Volusia/Brevard:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March: 75-fish April through September: 3,500 pounds <i>South of Volusia/Brevard:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March: 75-fish April through September: 75-fish (reduced to 50-fish once 75% of season one quota reached)
	• Season 2	
<i>North of Flagler/Volusia:</i> 3,500 pounds. <i>South of Flagler/Volusia:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> October through January: 50-fish February: 50-fish unless <70% of the season two quota has been reached, then 75-fish 		
Minimum Size Limit	24-inches FL	

- CMP Amendment 26 used an average weight of 8.48-lbs per king mackerel (**Table 3**):

Table 3. Number of fish to pounds as landed conversion.

Number of Fish	Average Weight (lbs)
50	424
75	636
100	848
125	1060
150	1272
175	1484
200	1696

Source: Trip Intercept Program, 2015

- During the last five fishing seasons the commercial king mackerel fishery has landed an average of 45% of the annual catch limit (ACL) (**Table 4**).

Table 4. Atlantic king mackerel total commercial landings (pounds) and ACL from the 2000/2001 season through the 2018/2019 season.

Season	Landings Total	ACL	% ACL
2000/2001	2,094,829	3,710,000	56%
2001/2002	2,014,433	3,710,000	54%
2002/2003	1,735,775	3,710,000	47%
2003/2004	1,722,493	3,710,000	46%
2004/2005	2,815,738	3,710,000	76%
2005/2006	2,242,996	3,710,000	60%
2006/2007	2,992,068	3,710,000	81%
2007/2008	2,657,098	3,710,000	72%
2008/2009	3,105,430	3,710,000	84%
2009/2010	3,560,920	3,710,000	96%
2010/2011	3,402,353	3,710,000	92%
2011/2012	2,051,937	3,880,660	53%
2012/2013	1,346,333	3,880,660	35%
2013/2014	1,142,835	3,880,660	29%
2014/2015	1,449,434	3,880,660	37%
2015/2016	1,793,571	3,880,660	46%
2016/2017	1,538,437	3,880,660	40%
2017/2018 ^a	2,754,311	5,900,000	47%
2018/2019 ^a	2,888,684	5,200,000	56%

Source: SERO ACL Monitoring, April 2, 2019

^a Preliminary landing estimates.

Note: From 2000/2001 through 2004/2005 the fishing year started on April 1st, subsequent fishing years started on March 1st.