

Commercial Spanish Mackerel Closures



Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Summary

Background

Stakeholders and the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (MCAP) have expressed concern about increased participation in the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery and how this increase may affect Spanish mackerel in the long term. Specifically, stakeholders are concerned about recent closures to commercial Spanish mackerel harvest in federal waters off the northern zone (New York/Connecticut/Rhode Island line to the North Carolina/South Carolina line). During the 2017/2018 season, 100,000 pounds of quota was transferred from the southern zone (NC/SC line to the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line, Florida) to the northern zone to prevent an early closure. However, the northern zone quota was still projected to be met and federal waters were closed to commercial harvest of Spanish mackerel on November 7, 2018. The southern zone did not close, but harvested 96.6% its remaining quota (SERO ALS, preliminary estimate). During the 2018/2019 season there was no transfer of quota between the two zones. The northern zone was closed to commercial harvest on November 4, 2018 and the southern zone was closed to commercial harvest on February 5, 2019.

Council Action

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) reviewed stakeholder concerns during their March 2019 meeting. Council members from North Carolina and Florida agreed that the closures were having a negative impact on their fishermen. Both states are looking into how the fishery has changed and will consider ways to address the closures in state waters.

The Council has requested input from the MCAP on management measures for federal waters that may help prevent closure of the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery, including trip limit step downs in the Northern Zone.

Previous Input on Spanish Mackerel

Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Meeting – April 2019:

MOTION: REQUEST THE COUNCIL CONSIDER A LIMITED ENTRY SYSTEM FOR ATLANTIC SPANISH MACKEREL.

APPROVED BY AP (11 IN FAVOR-0 OPPOSED-3 ABSTENTIONS).

Additional Information

- Commercial Atlantic Spanish mackerel regulations are as follows (**Table 1**):

Table 1. 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"> Total Commercial: 55% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Zone: 20% Southern Zone: 80%
Annual Catch Limit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Commercial: 3,300,000 pounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Zone: 662,670 pounds Southern Zone: 2,667,330 pounds
Season	March 1 st to the end of February
Trip/Bag Limit	Northern Zone
	3,500 pounds year-round
	Southern Zone
	Adjusted Quota = 2,417,330 pounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting March 1st until 75% of the adjusted quota is reached: 3,500 pounds From 75% until 100% of the adjusted quota is reached: 1,500 pounds From 100% adjusted quota until 100% of the full quota is reached: 500 pounds
Minimum Size Limit	12-inches FL

- The Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plan (CMP FMP) is a joint plan between the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) and the South Atlantic Council. The commercial permit for Spanish mackerel is currently open access and is required for harvest of Atlantic Spanish mackerel as well as Gulf Spanish mackerel. Any changes to permit requirements for Spanish mackerel would require collaboration with and approval from the Gulf Council.
- Commercial Spanish mackerel landings have exceeded the ACL in six of the last ten seasons (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Atlantic Spanish mackerel total commercial landings (pounds) and ACL from the 2000/2001 season through the 2018/2019 season.

Season	Landings Total	ACL	% ACL
2000/2001	2,855,805	3,870,000	74%
2001/2002	3,091,117	3,870,000	80%
2002/2003	3,257,807	3,870,000	84%
2003/2004	3,763,769	3,870,000	97%
2004/2005	3,379,347	3,870,000	87%
2005/2006	3,668,183	3,870,000	95%
2006/2007	3,643,179	3,620,000	101%
2007/2008	3,079,133	3,620,000	85%
2008/2009	3,170,622	3,620,000	88%
2009/2010	4,192,116	3,620,000	116%
2010/2011	4,568,511	3,620,000	126%
2011/2012	4,009,822	3,880,660	103%
2012/2013	3,151,602	3,130,000	101%
2013/2014	3,153,244	3,130,000	101%
2014/2015	2,898,515	3,330,000	87%
2015/2016	2,685,204	3,330,000	81%
2016/2017	3,205,370	3,330,000	96%
2017/2018 ^a	3,221,832	3,330,000	97%
2018/2019 ^a	3,977,085	3,330,000	119%

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.

- Both the Northern Zone and the Southern Zone have come close to meeting or exceeding their ACL in recent years (**Figure 1**).

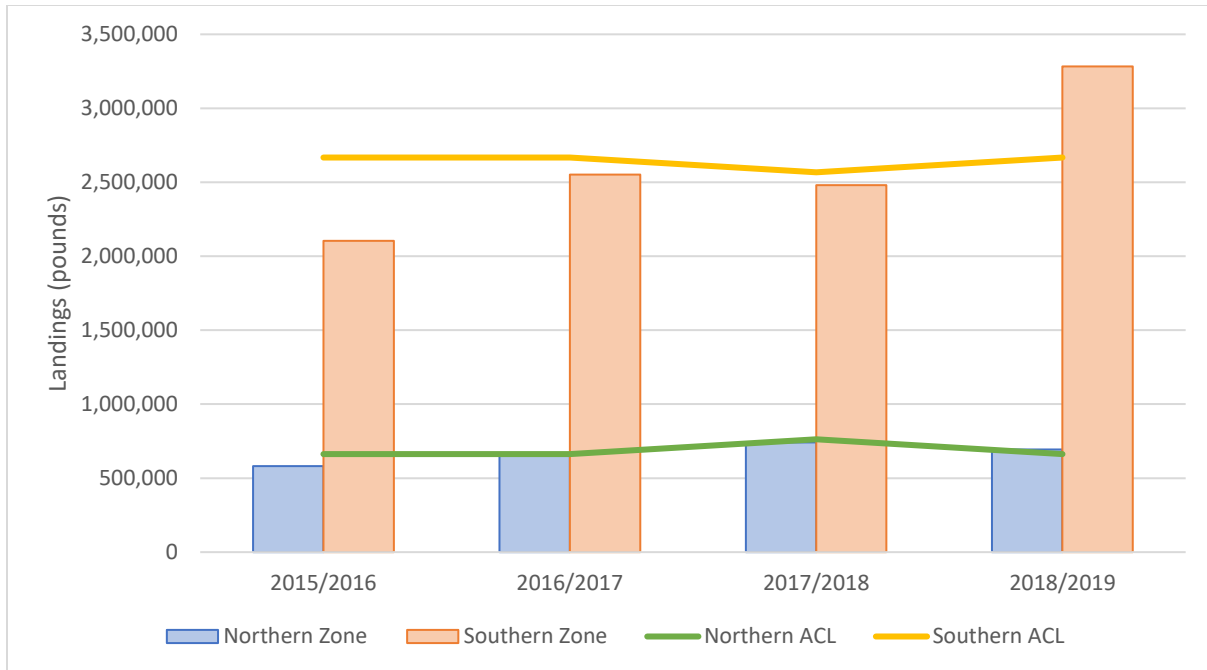


Figure 1. Commercial landings (pounds) of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel from 2015/2016 through the 2018/2019, by zone.

Source: SERO ACL Monitoring, April 2, 2019

Note: Landing estimates for the 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 season are preliminary.