PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY

for

Coastal Migratory Pelagics (Mackerel) Framework Amendment 1

Revised Spanish Mackerel Annual Catch Limits (ACLs)

This document is intended to serve as a SUMMARY for the actions and alternatives in Coastal Migratory Pelagics (Mackerel) Framework Amendment 1. It also provides background information and includes a summary of the expected biological, social, and economic effects from the proposed management measures.

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Comments are being accepted until 5 p.m., February 3, 2014

Why is the South Atlantic Council taking Action?

A Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) stock assessment for Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Spanish mackerel was finalized in 2013. The South Atlantic Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed the results of the stock assessment and made a recommendation for the acceptable biological catch (ABC). The South Atlantic Council proposes to revise the current annual catch limit (ACL) for Atlantic Spanish mackerel based on the new recommended ABC. The new ACL will also result in a revised value for optimum yield (OY), revised sector ACLs, and a revised recreational ACT.

	Current (Alternative 1)	**Proposed (Alternative 2)**
Total ACL	5,690,000 lbs ww	6,063,000 lbs ww
Commercial ACL (55%)	3,130,000 lbs ww	3,334,650 lbs ww
Recreational ACL (45%)	2,560,000 lbs ww	2,728,350 lbs ww
Recreational ACT	2,320,000 lbs ww	2,363,218 lbs ww

The amendment also includes an action to update the ACL for Gulf Spanish mackerel, which will be revised by Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council in February 2014.

Purpose for Action

The ***purpose*** of this amendment is to revise the ACLs for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel and Gulf migratory group Spanish mackerel based on the results of recently completed stock assessments.

Need for Action

The ***need*** for this amendment is to ensure the annual catch limits are based on the best available and most recent information, and ensure overfishing does not occur in the coastal migratory pelagics fishery.

What Are the Proposed Actions?

There are two actions proposed in this amendment. Each action has a range of alternatives, including a 'no action alternative' and a 'preferred alternative'.

Proposed Actions

1. Modify the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel

2. Modify the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) for Gulf migratory group Spanish mackerel

Which species and areas would be affected by the actions?

Three species—king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia—are included in the CMP FMP and are separated into Atlantic migratory groups and Gulf migratory groups. The proposed actions in this amendment would affect Atlantic and Gulf migratory groups of Spanish mackerel, and could affect anglers harvesting Spanish mackerel in the federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Mid-Atlantic regions.

Although the two migratory groups of Spanish mackerel mix in south Florida, abundance trends along each coast of Florida are different, indicating sufficient isolation between the two migratory groups to warrant separate management regimes. Consequently, the boundary for Spanish mackerel is fixed at the Miami-Dade/Monroe County border on Florida's southeast coast (**Figure S-1**). Within the Atlantic migratory group there are different regulations in Florida (Atlantic Migratory group South) and north of Florida (Atlantic Migratory group North).

Figure S-1. Boundaries for the Gulf and Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel. Management measures are designated for Atlantic Group North and Atlantic Group South.

What Are the Alternatives?

Action 1. Modify the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel

Alternative 1 (No Action). Retain the ACLs, optimum yield (OY), and recreational annual catch target ACT for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel:
Current acceptable biological catch (ABC) = 5.69 mp ww, recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) based on the third highest point over a ten-year period (equivalent to the 80th percentile) for the time series ranging from 1999-2008. The recreational ACT equals sector ACL[(1-PSE) or 0.5], whichever is greater, where the percent standard error (PSE) is an average from MRFSS based on landings in weight from 2005-2009. The average PSE from MRFSS for 2005-2009 is 8.2. The values would remain until modified.

ACL = OY = ABC = 5.69 mp ww
Commercial ACL (55%) = 3.13 mp ww
Recreational ACL (45%) = 2.56 mp ww
Recreational ACT = 2.32 mp ww

South Atlantic Preferred Alternative 2. Revise the ACL (including sector ACLs), OY, and ACT for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel for 2014 and 2015. The ABC recommended by the SSC is 6.063 mp ww. Set ACL = OY = ABC, and the recreational ACT = ACL[(1-PSE) or 0.5], whichever is greater. The ABC, ACL, and recreational ACT values are based on landed catch only; discards are accounted for in specifying the ABC in terms of landed catch and not total kill. The average PSE from MRIP for 2005-2009 is 13.34. The values would remain until modified.

ACL = OY = ABC = 6.063 mp ww
Commercial ACL (55%) = 3,334,650 lbs ww
Recreational ACL (45%) = 2,728,350 lbs ww
Recreational ACT = 2,363,218 lbs ww

Summary of Effects

Alternative 1 (No Action) would not modify the Atlantic group Spanish mackerel ACL based on the results of the stock assessment. **South Atlantic Preferred Alternative 2** would modify the ACL by setting ACL = OY = ABC, which is the same formula for specifying the ACL in **Alternative 1 (No Action)**. Thus, the total ACL would be 6.063 million pounds whole weight (mp ww). The commercial ACL, recreational ACL, and recreational ACT would be adjusted accordingly, based on existing sector allocations and the formula used for the recreational ACT in Amendment 18 (GMFMC/SAFMC 2011). Because **Alternative 1 (No Action)** would constrain harvest to a lower level than **South Atlantic Preferred Alternative 2**, the biological benefits under **Alternative 1 (No Action)** would be expected to be greater than **South Atlantic Preferred Alternative 2**. However, results of the most recent assessment for the Atlantic migratory group of Spanish mackerel indicate the stock is not overfished or undergoing

overfishing. Therefore, there is no biological need to constrain harvest at a level lower than that determined to be appropriate by the SSC.

In general, higher ACLs are better for both sectors as long as they are not exceeded and/or do not require overage paybacks in future seasons. **South Atlantic Preferred** **Alternative 2** would have the greatest positive direct economic effects. **Alternative 1 (No Action)** would maintain the status quo and is not expected to change economic effects. Changes in the ACL for any stock would not directly affect resource users unless the ACL is met or exceeded, in which case accountability measures, which restrict or close harvest, could negatively affect the commercial fleet, for-hire fleet, and private anglers. In general, the higher the ACL, the greater the short-term social and economic benefits that would be expected to accrue, assuming information is up-to-date and accurate to allow sustainable harvest. **Alternative 1** would not incorporate the results of the recent stock assessment and the current ACL may not best reflect the stock status at this time. South Atlantic Preferred **Alternative 2** would increase the ACL based on the best information available from a recent assessment, which would be beneficial to fishermen by allowing additional Spanish mackerel to be harvested but without negatively affecting the stock. Administrative impacts of this action are likely to be minimal.

Figure 2.1 compares total landings of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel with the ACLs proposed in the alternatives. **Figure S-2** shows the comparison of sector landings to the proposed sector ACLs and recreational ACT in the alternatives.

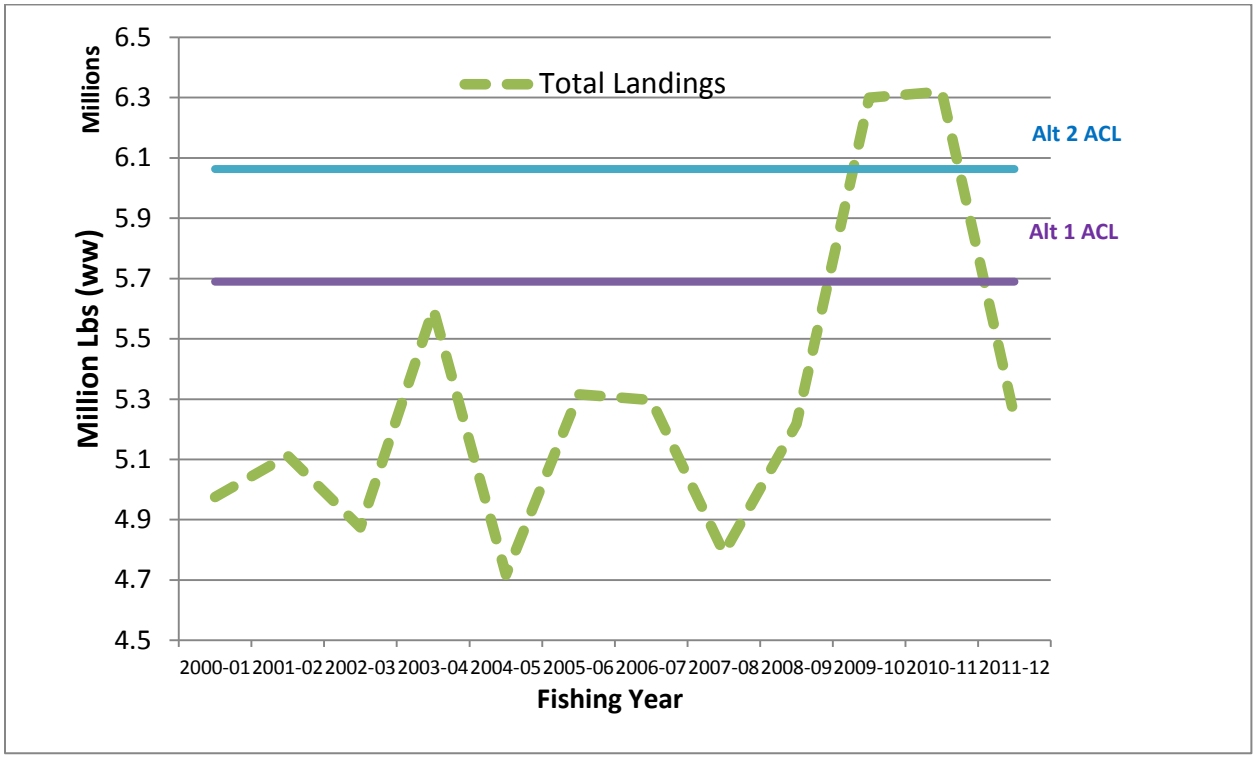

Figure S-2. Total landings of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel since the 2000/2001 fishing season compared to the proposed ACLs in **Action 1**. The fishing season is March-February. Data source: SERO.

Action 2. Modify the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) for Gulf migratory group Spanish mackerel

*****NOTE: The alternatives below are staff recommendations and have not been reviewed or approved by the Gulf Council.**

Alternative 1 (No Action). Retain the current ACL for Gulf migratory group Spanish mackerel:

Current ABC = 5.15 mp ww.

ACL= ABC =5.15 mp ww (single Gulf-wide stock ACL).

Alternative 2. Revise ACL for Gulf migratory group Spanish mackerel for 2014 through 2016 as shown below, and set ACL = ABC.

Table S-1. ABCs and ACLs for 2014-2016 from the SEDAR 28 Gulf Spanish mackerel stock assessment and the Gulf Council/SSC-approved projections for Gulf migratory group Spanish mackerel. 'ww' = whole weight, and 'mp' = million pounds.

Year	ABC ww	Total ACL ww
2014	12.7 mp	12.7 mp
2015	11.8 mp	11.8 mp
2016	11.3 mp	11.3 mp

Summary of Effects

Alternative 1 would not update ACLs based on results from the recent stock assessment, and would therefore not result in a change to the current biological environment. **Alternative 2** proposes to increase the ACL, which could lead to additional removals from the population. **Alternative 2** would employ the same formula as specified in the **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, and set the ACL = ABC. However, since the ACL is equal to the SSC-recommended ABC, there is little risk of any direct or indirect negative biological effects.

Alternative 1 (No Action) would maintain a Gulf migratory group Spanish mackerel ACL of 5.15 mp ww, and would not be expected to have economic effects. Between 2000 and 2011, Gulf Spanish mackerel landings averaged 3.93 mp ww annually. During the same time interval, the maximum harvest level was 4.88 mp ww. This value is well below the 5.15 mp ww current ACL. It is therefore highly unlikely that economic benefits that could result from ACL increase under consideration in **Alternative 2** would materialize. In the future, should commercial and recreational fishermen elect to take advantage of the additional fishing opportunities provided by **Alternative 2,** direct economic benefits proportional to the ACL increases could be realized. Since current landings of Gulf migratory group Spanish mackerel usually do not meet the current ACL under **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, the proposed increases in the ACL under **Alternative 2** is not expected to change fishing behavior or access to the resource, and would likely be beneficial to the fleet while maintaining sustainable harvest. Administrative impacts of this action are likely to be minimal.

Public Hearing Dates and Locations

South Atlantic public hearings will be held from 4 - 7 p.m. in the following locations:

January 21, 2014 Bay Watch Resort & Conference Center 2701 S. Ocean Boulevard N. Myrtle Beach, SC 29582 Phone:843-272-4600	**January 22, 2014** DoubleTree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront 2717 West Fort Macon Road Atlantic Beach, NC 28512 Phone: 252-240-115
January 27, 2014 Key West Marriott Beachside 3841 N. Roosevelt Boulevard Key West, FL 33040 Phone: 305-296-8100	**January 28, 2014** DoubleTree by Hilton Cocoa Beach Oceanfront 2080 N. Atlantic Avenue Cocoa Beach, FL 32931 Phone: 321-783-9222
January 29, 2014 Wyndham Jacksonville Riverwalk 1515 Prudential Drive Jacksonville, FL 32207 Phone: 904-396-5100	**January 30, 2014** Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum 175 Bourne Avenue Pooler, GA 31322 Phone: 912-743-8888

The Mid-Atlantic public hearing will be held at the Mid-Atlantic Council meeting in February:

Date TBA Doubletree by Hilton New Bern – Riverfront 100 Middle St. New Bern, NC 28560 252-638-3585

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Please e-mail comments to:
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All comments must be received by 5 p.m. on February 3, 2014

What are the Next Steps?

South Atlantic Council selects preferred alternative and approves for public hearings
December 2013

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South Atlantic Council holds public hearings
January 2014

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South Atlantic Council reviews public input and takes final action
March 2014

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Gulf Atlantic Council reviews public input, selects preferred alternatives, and takes final action
April 2014

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Framework Amendment 1 is submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation

May 2013