

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

# Coastal Migratory Pelagics Joint Amendment 26

(separate South Atlantic and Gulf commercial permits)

MACKEREL ADVISORY PANEL



**March 2014**

## **Background**

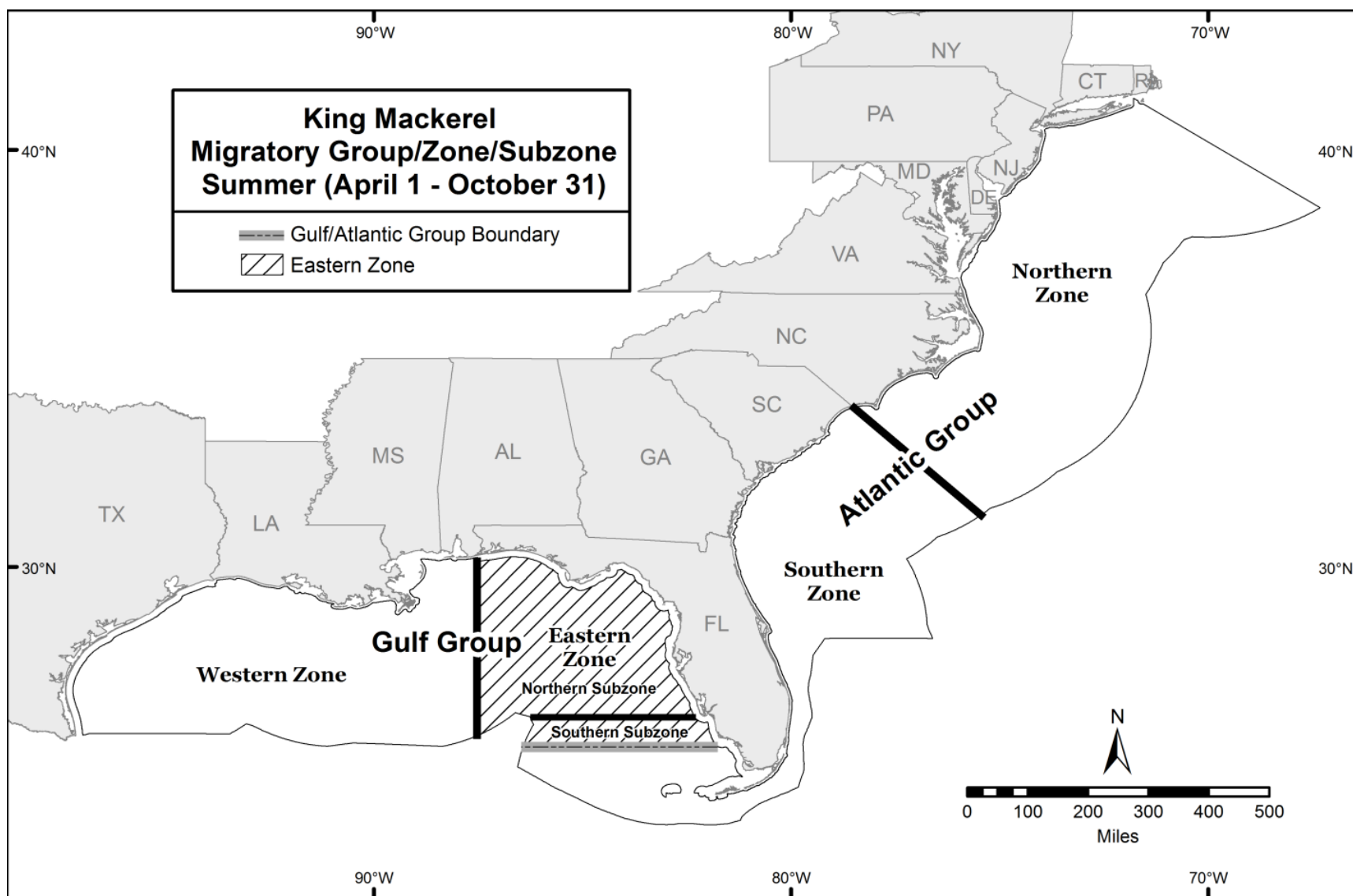
Currently the federal commercial king mackerel and Spanish mackerel permits are valid for commercial harvest of the respective species in both the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic. Originally, the permits were separate for the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic. However NMFS administratively combined the permits. This amendment considers actions to separate the commercial permits for king mackerel and Spanish mackerel into one permit for each species in each region (Gulf king mackerel, Atlantic king mackerel, Gulf Spanish mackerel, and Atlantic Spanish mackerel), and may include actions to reduce participation in overcapitalized regions.

There are vessels that travel and fish in both regions, and some vessels that fish only in specific areas. The South Atlantic Council is concerned with effort in the East Coast Florida subzone, but other areas in the Gulf and Atlantic regions may not have issues with the number of active permits. Some historical king mackerel fishermen are concerned that permit holders who have not been fishing regularly or fishing at low levels may begin participating more fully. More vessels fishing under the same quota could mean lower catches for each vessel.

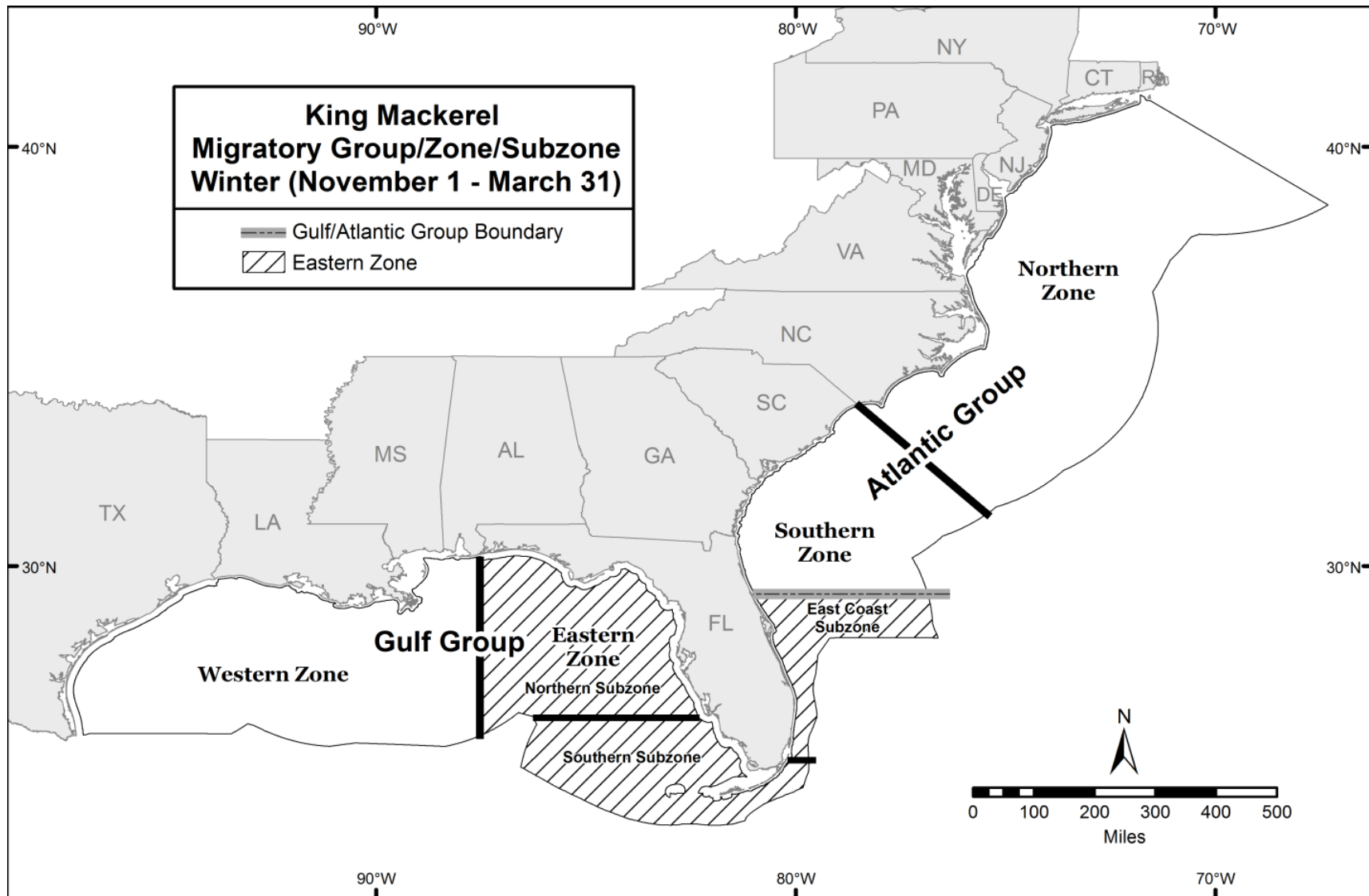
Many king mackerel fishermen diversify and harvest species from multiple fisheries. Although they may be considered “part-time” king mackerel fishermen, these individuals are often full-time commercial fishermen who primarily target other species. However, king mackerel may contribute a large portion of their income. The migratory nature of the fish promotes this part-time participation for those who do not want to travel long distances. Thus, elimination of permits with low levels of landings could eliminate full-time fishermen that are only part-time king mackerel fishermen because of their diversification. In Joint Amendment 20A, the Councils considered ways to remove inactive permits, but public comments indicated that fishermen in most areas in the regions did not feel that latent effort was a problem or would impact the stock.

Establishing criteria for future permits would be difficult because historically, some vessels from the Atlantic have fished on the Gulf group king mackerel quota, particularly in the Western Zone and the Northern Subzone of the Eastern Zone off Florida. Additionally, there are different seasons in the Gulf and Atlantic, and different zones that have different trip limits. Consequently, setting qualifications based on landings is biased by region because management may not allow fishermen to participate at the same level in different places.

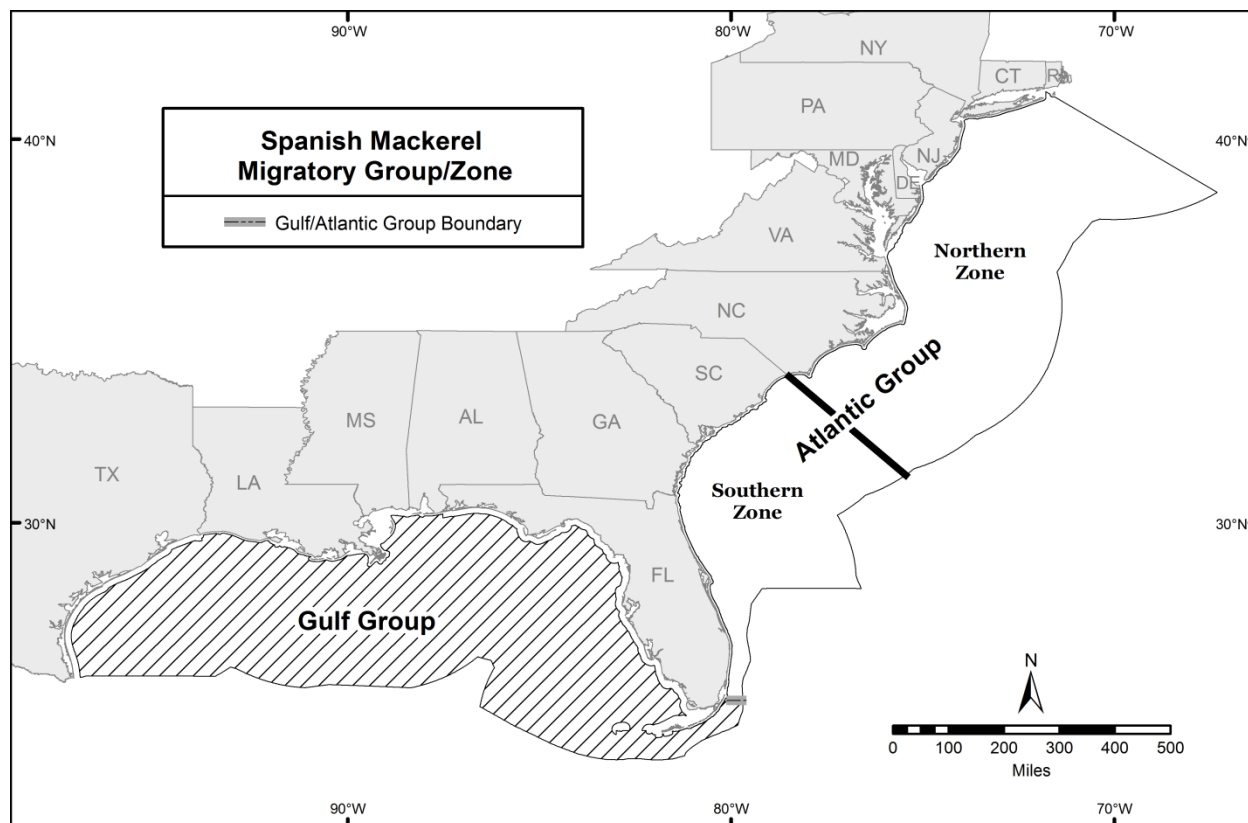
Another way to restrict participation would be to require endorsements for different regions. This option was explored for the Gulf zones in Amendment 20B, but was moved to the considered but rejected section. The Gulf Council determined the establishment of endorsements would increase the monitoring and enforcement burden tremendously. However, the South Atlantic Council may explore the idea for their region.



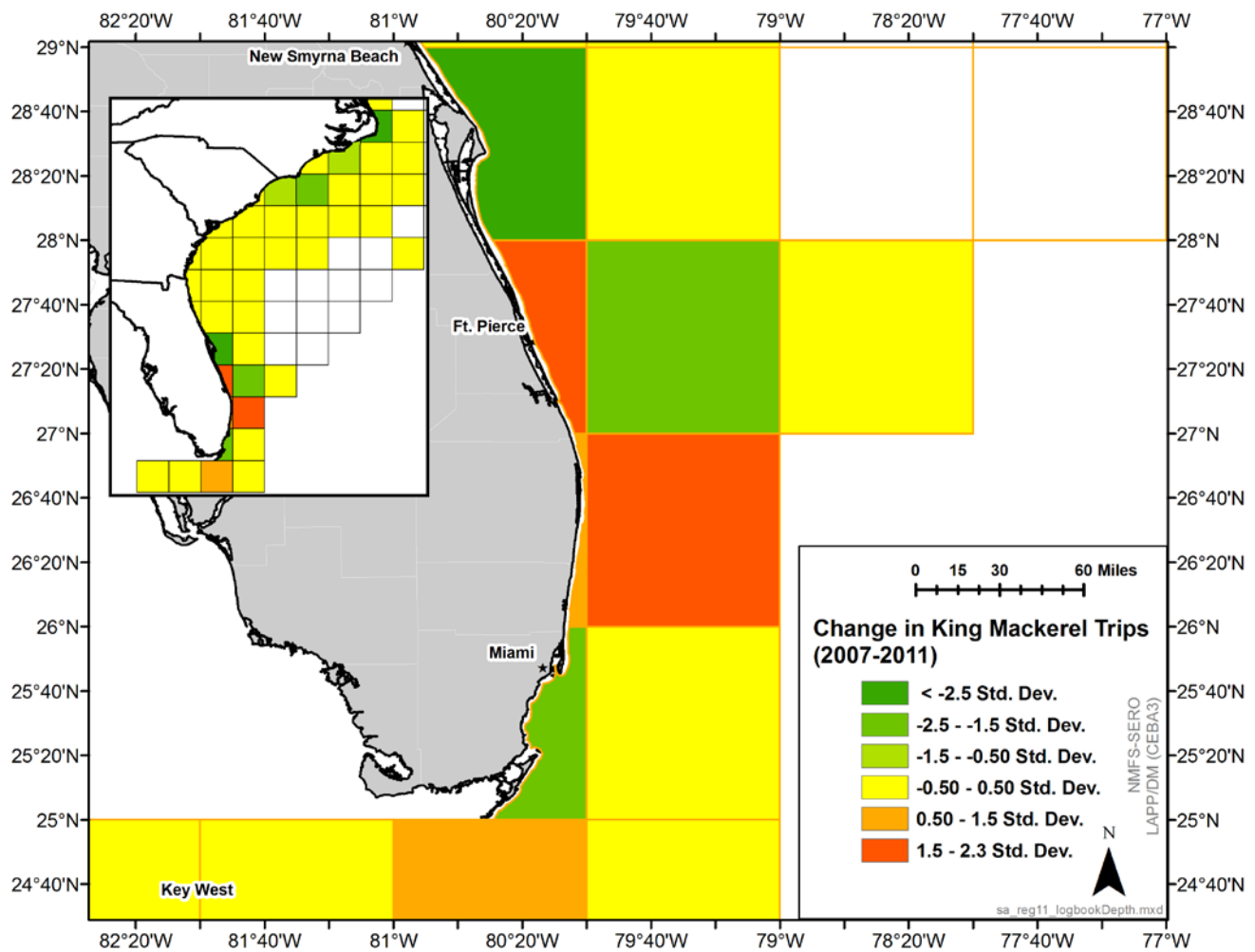
**Figure S-1.** King mackerel seasonal boundaries April 1-October 31, with the proposed Northern and Southern Zones in the Atlantic Group (pending submission and approval of CMP Amendment 20B).



**Figure S-2.** King mackerel seasonal boundaries November 1- March 31, with the proposed Northern and Southern Zones in the Atlantic Group (pending submission and approval of CMP Amendment 20B).



**Figure S-3.** Fixed boundary between Atlantic and Gulf migratory groups of Spanish mackerel, with the proposed Northern and Southern Zones in the Atlantic Group (pending submission and approval of CMP Amendment 20B).



**Figure S-4.** Change in commercial king mackerel trips (all gear types) between 2007 and 2011. **Green indicates an overall decrease in the number of KM trips; yellow indicates relative stability; and red indicates an overall increase in the number of KM trips.** Analysis and graphic by Nick Farmer, SERO, using Logbook data.

### **King Mackerel Commercial Permits**

- Limited access permit since 1996 (first established in Amendment 8, extended in Amendment 12, and indefinite extension in Amendment 15)
- 1,348 valid permits (as of March 17, 2014)
- The Councils considered ways to address permits with low or no landings in recent years (eliminating them, or making them non-transferable) in Amendment 20A, but based on public input decided to make no changes to the king mackerel permits.

### **Spanish Mackerel Commercial Permits**

- Open access permit
- 1,747 valid permits (as of March 17, 2014); permit number is variable but in recent years is typically between 1,700 and 1,800 permits

### **Things to Consider for Establishing Separate Gulf and Atlantic permits**

- Eligibility requirements to receive in each region
- Control date [most recent: June 15, 2004]
- Permit reduction for king mackerel or limited access for Spanish mackerel
- Can an individual be eligible to receive permits for both regions
- Transferable/non-transferable or Limited/Unlimited permits (similar to Snapper Grouper)
- Two-for-one requirement for new entrants
- Endorsement for East Coast Florida subzone (Nov- March) or other areas
- Endorsement for specific areas

### **Recent Council Decisions**

- In February 2014, the Gulf Council decided to hold development of Amendment 26 until after the results of the king mackerel stock assessment (SEDAR 38) are final.
- In March 2014, the South Atlantic Council directed staff to prepare a white paper on ways that the permits could be separated for the September 2014 meeting.

### **Trigger Questions from Scoping**

- Should the Spanish mackerel commercial permits be separated into Gulf permits and Atlantic permits?
- Should the king mackerel commercial permits be separated into Gulf permits and Atlantic permits?
- If so, what would be the requirements to get a permit for each region?
- For areas with increased participation (FL mixing zone for king mackerel), would an endorsement program work?
- Are there other issues with the current permit system to address, and how should we address those?

## **Comments Summary for South Atlantic Scoping for CMP Amendment 26 January 2014**

General topics from public input (including recorded testimony, written comments, and informal discussion):

- support for separating permits, primarily at the Cocoa Beach meeting so that the Councils could address specific problems in their region without impacting the other region.
- some opposition to separate permits (Key West and Jacksonville) because of fishermen harvesting in both regions, and impact on new entrants who want to work both regions
- some meeting attendees supported removal of king mackerel permits with no or low landings so that full-time mackerel fishermen could have access to the ACL (primarily in Cocoa Beach)
- some opposition to any action that would take away king mackerel permits with no or low landings (NC, Jacksonville, Key West) because the Councils should not take away any more permits. It was also noted in Key West that a higher trip limit would increase the number of active permits, so the Councils should consider increasing trip limits before any action to address latent permits.
- some opposition to a two-for-one requirement on king mackerel permits because of impact on new entrants and increased capital required to enter the fishery
- some support for a two-for-one requirement (Cocoa Beach)
- some support for an endorsement for the king mackerel mixing zone
- if permits are split, support for qualifying for both permits if the permit holder has landings in both areas, and use a very recent control date
- South Atlantic staff plans to meet with the Cocoa Beach/Canaveral mackerel fishermen to discuss options for specific actions to address king mackerel effort in the mixing zone.