

MEETING REPORT

South Atlantic Mackerel Advisory Panel

April 15, 2015
North Charleston, SC

The King Mackerel and Spanish Mackerel Advisory Panel (AP) met to discuss (A) Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP) Joint Amendment 24, (B) CMP Joint Amendment 26, and (C) Framework Amendment 2. The AP reviewed each amendment and provided recommendations for the Council to consider at their June 2014 meeting.

AP Members

Robert Pelosi, AP Chair- *FL/Recreational*
Mason Bowen- *FL/Commercial*
Dick Brame- *NC/Recreational/NGO Seat*
Steve English- *FL/Commercial*
Manuel Herrera - *FL/Commercial*
Andy High- *NC/Commercial*
Bill Kelly- *FL/Commercial*
Ira Laks- *FL/Charter*
Selby Lewis- *NC/Commercial*
Tom Ogle- *SC/Recreational*
Stephen Swann- *FL/Recreational*

AP Members not in attendance

Charles Amory- *Mid-Atlantic Liaison*
Bill Hickman- *NC/Commercial*
Robert Olsen- *SC/Charter*
Bill Wickers- *FL/Charter*

Council Members

Ben Hartig, Council Chair and Mackerel
Committee Chair
Michelle Duval, Council Vice-Chair
Anna Beckwith
Zack Bowen
Mark Brown
Chris Conklin

Council Staff

Kari MacLauchlin
Chip Collier
Mike Errigo
Julie O'Dell
Gregg Waugh

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved after two additional items were added: (1) Dr. Peter Barile would provide a presentation on king mackerel recruitment on the Florida east coast, and (2) the AP would discuss Amendment 28 (separate permits/FMPs).

Status of Recent Amendments

Following introductions and approval of the April 2014 minutes, Council staff provided a status update on recent amendments that the AP had discussed at previous meetings. These included Amendment 20A, Amendment 20B, South Atlantic Framework Action 2013, and Framework Amendment 1.

Presentation on King Mackerel Recruitment on the Florida East Coast

Dr. Peter Barile, scientist and consultant for the East Coast Fisheries Section of the Southeastern Fisheries Association, provided a presentation to the AP on data indicating significant recruitment in king mackerel on the Florida east coast. The study analyzed age and size data obtained from Trip-Intercept Program (TIP) data on king mackerel caught off the Florida east coast to examine recruitment

after the cutoff date for data used in SEDAR 38. The results indicate that there may be age classes in the stock that were not evident in the SEDAR 38 models, and recruitment may be more significant than suggested by the stock assessment results.

Joint CMP Amendment 26

Council staff reviewed the actions in Amendment 26 with the AP. Approved motions and discussion points are included under each action.

Action 1. Modify the Management Boundary for Gulf and Atlantic Migratory Groups of King Mackerel

Council staff presented Action 1 alternatives that were approved by the Council in March 2015 in addition to IPT-recommended alternatives and sub-alternatives for Action 1 that may be presented to the Council in June 2015.

MOTION # 1: ADOPT REVISED ALTERNATIVE 3 AND SUB-ALTERNATIVE 3A AS THE PREFERRED.

APPROVED BY AP (1 opposed).

(IPT SUGGESTED LANGUAGE) Alternative 3. Establish a permanent, year-round boundary for separating the Gulf and Atlantic migratory groups of king mackerel at the Dade/Monroe County line (**Figure 2.1.3**). The mixing zone would be designated as the area south of the Florida Keys and Dry Tortugas, demarcated in the west by a line west from Key West to the Dry Tortugas at 24°35' North latitude, then south at 83° West longitude from the Dry Tortugas (the Gulf of Mexico/South Atlantic Council boundary) to the shelf edge, and in the east from the Dade-Monroe county line to the shelf edge. The Gulf Council would be responsible for management measures in the mixing zone. **Gulf AP Preferred**

Allocate the percentage of the Atlantic commercial ACL equal to the average commercial landings attributable to the Atlantic migratory group in the mixing zone to the Gulf commercial ACL and the Gulf Southern Zone commercial hook-and-line quota. Allocate the percentage of the Atlantic recreational ACL equal to the average recreational landings attributable to the Atlantic migratory group in the mixing zone to the Gulf recreational ACL.

Sub-Alternative 3a. Allocate the proportions of the Atlantic sector ACLs to the Gulf sector ACLs using the average landings from the most recent 10 years (2005-2014).

During discussion, one AP member voiced concern that South Atlantic fishermen could lose access to the Keys if the Gulf Council having jurisdiction over Monroe County. Another member did not feel that an allocation of the Atlantic ACL to the Gulf ACL was necessary. In support of Sub-Alternative 3a, the AP felt that 10 years sufficiently captured the current conditions of the fishery.

Note that the AP Discussion Document for Amendment 26 included both current alternatives, and language/ alternatives that the IPT will recommend to the Councils at the June 2015 meeting.

Action 2-1. Revise the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) for Atlantic Migratory Group King Mackerel
MOTION #2: ACCEPT THE HIGHEST RECRUITMENT SCENARIO (ALTERNATIVE 2).
APPROVED BY AP (2 opposed).

Alternative 2. Revise the ABC for Atlantic Migratory Group King Mackerel for 2016/17 through 2019/20 2020/21 based on the ABC levels recommended by the SSC for ABC under a high recruitment scenario.

MOTION #3: RECOMMEND A RECRUITMENT REVIEW FOR ACTION 2 WITHIN TWO YEARS.
APPROVED BY AP.

Most of the AP members supported recommending the high recruitment scenario as the preferred alternative because the high recruitment model was an average for projected landings. AP members not supportive of the high recruitment ABC voiced concern about the decrease in recreational landings. All AP members supported a review of the recruitment model within two years to evaluate if the high recruitment ABC is still appropriate for the fishery.

Action 2-2. Revise the ACL and Recreational ACT for Atlantic Migratory Group King Mackerel
MOTION #4: RECOMMEND HIGHEST ACL (ALTERNATIVE 2 BASED ON ALTERNATIVE 2 IN ACTION 2-1), CONSIDERING THAT AN UPDATED RECRUITMENT STUDY BE DONE.
APPROVED BY AP (7/4).

Alternative 2. Establish ACL = OY = ABC based on the ABC levels selected under Action 2-1.

Most AP members supported setting the ACL equal to the high recruitment ABC. Some members had concerns about risk of negative effects on the stock if the high recruitment ABC was not appropriate, so the motion was amended to add the recommendation for an updated recruitment study. Additionally, some AP members expressed concern about how long a framework amendment could take to be developed and implemented, if it was necessary to change the ACL.

Action 3. Incidental Catch Allowance for Atlantic Migratory Group King Mackerel Caught in the Shark Gillnet Fishery
MOTION #5: RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVE 3, SUB-ALTERNATIVE 1 (100 LBS LIMIT) AS PREFERRED.
APPROVED BY AP (10/1).

(IPT SUGGESTED) Alternative 3. Allow retention and sale of Atlantic migratory group king mackerel caught with gillnet as incidental catch in the drift gillnet portion of the commercial shark fishery for any vessel with a valid shark directed commercial permit AND valid federal king mackerel commercial permit. The king mackerel must be sold to a dealer with the Southeast federal dealer permit.

(IPT SUGGESTED) Sub-Alternative 1. For shark gillnet trips in the South Atlantic, no more than 100 lbs of king mackerel can be on board, and no more than 100 lbs of king mackerel can be sold from the trip.

The AP was supportive of allowing shark gillnet fishermen to retain and sell king mackerel caught on shark gillnet trips. Alternative 3 would reduce dead discards, but the trip limit in Sub-Alternative 1 is low enough to not encourage fishermen to target king mackerel. One AP member noted that the

allowance was inconsistent with Amendment 20A (prohibition on bag limit sales). For the trip limit, one AP member preferred 50 lbs and another member preferred number of fish instead of pounds because weight per fish varies. Although this practice is currently only occurring in Florida, Alternative 3 would allow retention and sale of king mackerel in the rest of the region as well, and one AP member pointed out that shark gillnet fishermen working north of Hatteras could switch to trawling to target king mackerel. Additionally, the AP requested that staff compile data on the number of pounds of king mackerel per shark gillnet trip.

Action 4. Florida East Coast Subzone for Atlantic Migratory Group King Mackerel

Council staff provided possible actions and alternatives for management in the Florida east coast (FLEC) subzone, including boundaries, when the subzone exists (year-round or a sub-season), sub-quota, and trip limits. AP members made the following recommendations:

The Southern Zone quota would have seasonal allocations. The first season would be March 1 – September 30 and would be allocated 60% of the Southern Zone quota. The second season would be October 1- February 28 and would be allocated 40% of the Southern Zone quota plus any unused quota from the first season. There would be no sub-quota for the FLEC subzone. Quota transfers between the Northern Zone and Southern Zone would still be allowed.

March 1 through September 30

- The FLEC subzone would be from the Volusia/Brevard county line to the Dade/Monroe county line.
- The commercial trip limit in the FLEC subzone would be 75 fish with a possible step-down to 50 fish on May 1. The step-down could apply for only the month of May or through the summer.
- The commercial trip limit north of the Volusia/Brevard county line could be 3,500 lbs.

October 1 through February 28/29

- The FLEC subzone would be from the Flagler/Volusia county line to the Dade/Monroe county line.
- The commercial trip limit in the FLEC subzone would be 50 fish with a possible increase to 75% if X% of the quota has not been met by [date].
- The commercial trip limit north of the Flagler/Volusia county line could be 3,500 lbs.

The AP also suggested exploring the trip limit for the FLEC subzone in pounds, as well as in numbers of fish. There could also be an alternative that was a combination of both. The AP requested that staff provide the expected quotas for the suggested first and second seasons.

Action 5. (IN SCOPING). Update Reference Points (MSY, MSST, MFMT/OFL), and Revise the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) for Gulf Migratory Group King Mackerel

The AP voiced concern about the projections from the SEDAR 38 model for Gulf king mackerel, because the recommended ABCs/ACLs for Gulf king mackerel decrease over time. The stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

Action 6 (IN SCOPING). Revise the Zone and Subzone Commercial Quotas for Gulf Migratory Group King Mackerel

MOTION #6: ENDORSE THE GULF COUNCIL AP'S RECOMMENDATION FOR ALLOCATION AS FOLLOWS:

WESTERN ZONE: 40%

NORTHERN ZONE: 18%

SOUTHERN H&L: 21%

SOUTHERN GILLNET: 21%

APPROVED BY AP (8/2)

Action 7 (IN SCOPING). Revise the Recreational and Commercial Allocations of Gulf Migratory Group King Mackerel

The AP decided to postpone recommendations until further decisions by the Gulf Council.

Action 8 (IN SCOPING). Modify the Recreational Bag Limit for Gulf Migratory Group King Mackerel

The AP decided to postpone recommendations until further decisions by the Gulf Council.

Electronic Technology Plan and Generic Charterboat Reporting Amendment

Council staff provided an overview of the current activities by NMFS and the Council in regards to electronic reporting. The Electronic Technology Plan was released by NMFS on February 26, 2015. The Council provided two comment letters in response to development of the plan. The information was provided to the AP so that they are aware of this effort and the potential impacts to their reporting. The AP was informed that the South Atlantic Council is more interested in electronic reporting than in electronic monitoring.

The AP was also informed that the Council is interested in a pilot study with South Atlantic charterboats to test tablet-based logbooks for charter reporting. AP members representing the charter sector may be interested in participating in the study.

One AP member felt that charterboat reporting requirements will be difficult to enforce under the open access permit system for CMP as well as snapper grouper. The AP also discussed challenges in reporting for the commercial sector, including delay in getting the trip ticket and price to record in the logbook several days after a trip, and increased complexity with multi-day trips.

Next, Council staff reviewed actions and alternatives in the Generic Charterboat Reporting Amendment. This is a joint amendment with the Gulf Council that would apply to charterboats with federal for-hire permits for coastal migratory pelagics in addition to Gulf reef fish, South Atlantic snapper grouper, and South Atlantic dolphin wahoo. AP members voiced concern about buy-in and difficulties in enforcement, especially for dually permitted vessels. The AP approved the following motion:

MOTION #7: IF COUNCIL IS CONSIDERING GOING TO FOR-HIRE ELECTRONIC REPORTING, THEN THE FOR-HIRE PERMITS SHOULD BE LIMITED ENTRY. Approved by AP.

South Carolina Cobia Distinct Population Segments

Dr. Mike Denson of South Carolina Department of Natural Resources provided a presentation to the AP on the inshore cobia population in South Carolina that comes inshore to spawn in April through June. Catch data suggest that fishing effort has increased and landings have decreased. Genetic data suggests that the effective population size is reaching a critical low point and the results of mark recapture data suggest that the population is in decline. South Carolina is considering changes to regulations, including lowering the bag limit, setting a vessel limit, prohibiting harvest during spawning months, and/or allowing only catch-and-release during spawning months.

Joint CMP Amendment 28

In March 2015, the South Atlantic Council approved a motion to stop development on Amendment 28, which would consider separate permits or separate fishery management plans for the Gulf and Atlantic. The Gulf Council is proceeding with the amendment and is currently scoping the potential actions. Council Chair Ben Hartig requested that the AP discuss and make a recommendation for the upcoming joint meeting of the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils in Key West in June.

There was some support for separate permits or FMPs, but overall the majority of the AP did not support separate management. This was primarily due to concern that South Atlantic fishermen could lose access to Gulf stocks, which would especially impact traveling fishermen. The AP also commented that separate management would not be practical for Florida. There was some support for separate management if there were fair measures implemented to allow South Atlantic fishermen to continue to fish in the Gulf.

The AP approved the following motion:

MOTION #8: RECOMMEND TO NOT SEPARATE THE PERMITS, MAINTAIN STATUS QUO.

APPROVED BY AP. (8/1/1).

In regards to permits, the AP discussed king mackerel commercial permits with low or no landings. Some AP members felt that a passive reduction (making latent permits non-transferable) would be a fair way to reduce the number of permits. One AP member pointed out that low trip limits for king mackerel may hinder a permit holder's ability to keep landings on a permit, and trip limits should be increased before any changes to the permits take place.

Administrative Business

Council staff reviewed the change to term limits for AP members. Council Chair Ben Hartig then presented a commemorative box to AP Chair Bob Pelosi, who has served on the Mackerel AP for 30 years. Next, the AP selected Ira Laks as the new AP Chair and Stephen Swann as the AP Vice-chair.

Other Business

AP Chair Pelosi raised the topic of potential conflict between cast net users and hook and line fishermen targeting Spanish mackerel in Florida. There have been some issues with conflict over fishing grounds, and the cast nets bring in large amounts of Spanish mackerel that can suppress the dockside price when

the market becomes flooded. This could have negative effects on the Spanish mackerel stock in the future, and Chairman Pelosi recommends that the cast nets be limited if a problem comes up.

Next, the AP discussed two additional motions in regards to bag limit sales of cobia, and tournament sales of king mackerel and Spanish mackerel in Florida.

MOTION #9: BAN BAG LIMIT SALES OF COBIA, ATTACH SALE TO KING MACKEREL COMMERCIAL PERMIT, GO TO 1/PERSON REC BAG LIMIT IN THE EEZ OFF FLORIDA TO BE CONSISTENT WITH FLORIDA BAG LIMIT, AND COMMERCIAL LIMIT AT 4/BOAT OR 2/PERSON, WHICHEVER IS HIGHER.

APPROVED BY AP. (4 opposed)

Additionally, the AP suggested that the Council recommend to Florida to get the tournament system in place for king mackerel and Spanish mackerel sales. Currently there is no permit system in place, but tournament sales are tracked on trip tickets with a special code. Some AP members felt that because there is no official permit system in place, there could be some tournaments not complying with the Council's intent for allowing tournament sales. Some AP members also felt that the tournament sales should not be counted against the commercial quota.