

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Coastal Migratory Pelagics Framework Amendment 2

(Atlantic group Spanish mackerel trip limits)

MACKEREL ADVISORY PANEL



March 2014

Background

Background: The South Atlantic Council is interested in ways to reduce the complexity of the current commercial trip limit system for Atlantic group Spanish mackerel in Florida waters and to maintain trip limits to meet management goals for the fishery, and had placed the action in South Atlantic Framework Action 2013. In June 2013 the Council approved a motion to move the action to a future amendment after the Spanish mackerel stock assessment was complete, and in March 2014 the Council directed staff to place the action in Framework Amendment 2.

A trip limit system for Florida waters including unlimited week days, in-season reductions in trip limits, and an adjusted quota for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel was implemented through Amendment 6 in 1992. The adjustment (250,000 lbs below the specific commercial ACL) was calculated based on the number of vessels and the catch rates at that time, and was intended to allow fishing by small vessels at 500 lbs for the rest of the year. However, both the number of vessels and the catch rates have changes in the past 20 years and may have reduced the effectiveness and necessity of the 250,000-lb adjustment.

When the current trip limit system for Florida waters was put in place the total allowable catch (TAC) for commercial harvest of Atlantic Spanish mackerel was 3.87 million pounds (mp). The current commercial annual catch limit (ACL) set in Amendment 18 is 3.13 mp, and the Council has proposed a commercial ACL of 3.33 mp in Framework Amendment 1. Both the current and proposed commercial ACLs are lower than the TAC that was in place when the trip limit system was implemented. Additionally in Amendment 18, the Councils added an in-season closure when the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met as the commercial accountability measure for Atlantic Spanish mackerel.

The allowance of unlimited catch in Florida waters on weekdays beginning December 1 may contribute to early closures in the spring under the lower commercial ACL. On the other hand, the trip limit reduction may help lengthen the open season, and may be retained but based on the full quota rather than the adjusted quota. The alternatives for modifications to the trip limit system for Atlantic Spanish mackerel are included below and will be developed in CMP Framework Amendment 2.

Atlantic Spanish Mackerel	Total ACL	Commercial ACL
Until 2011/12	7.04 MP	3.87 MP
2011/12 thru 2013/14	5.69 MP	3.13 MP
Proposed 2014-2016	6.063 MP	3.33 MP

Expected Timeline:

June 2014- review by South Atlantic Council and direction to staff
September 2014- review, public hearing, and final action by South Atlantic Council
October 2014- review and final action by Gulf Council
November 2014- submitted for Secretarial Review
Early 2015- implementation

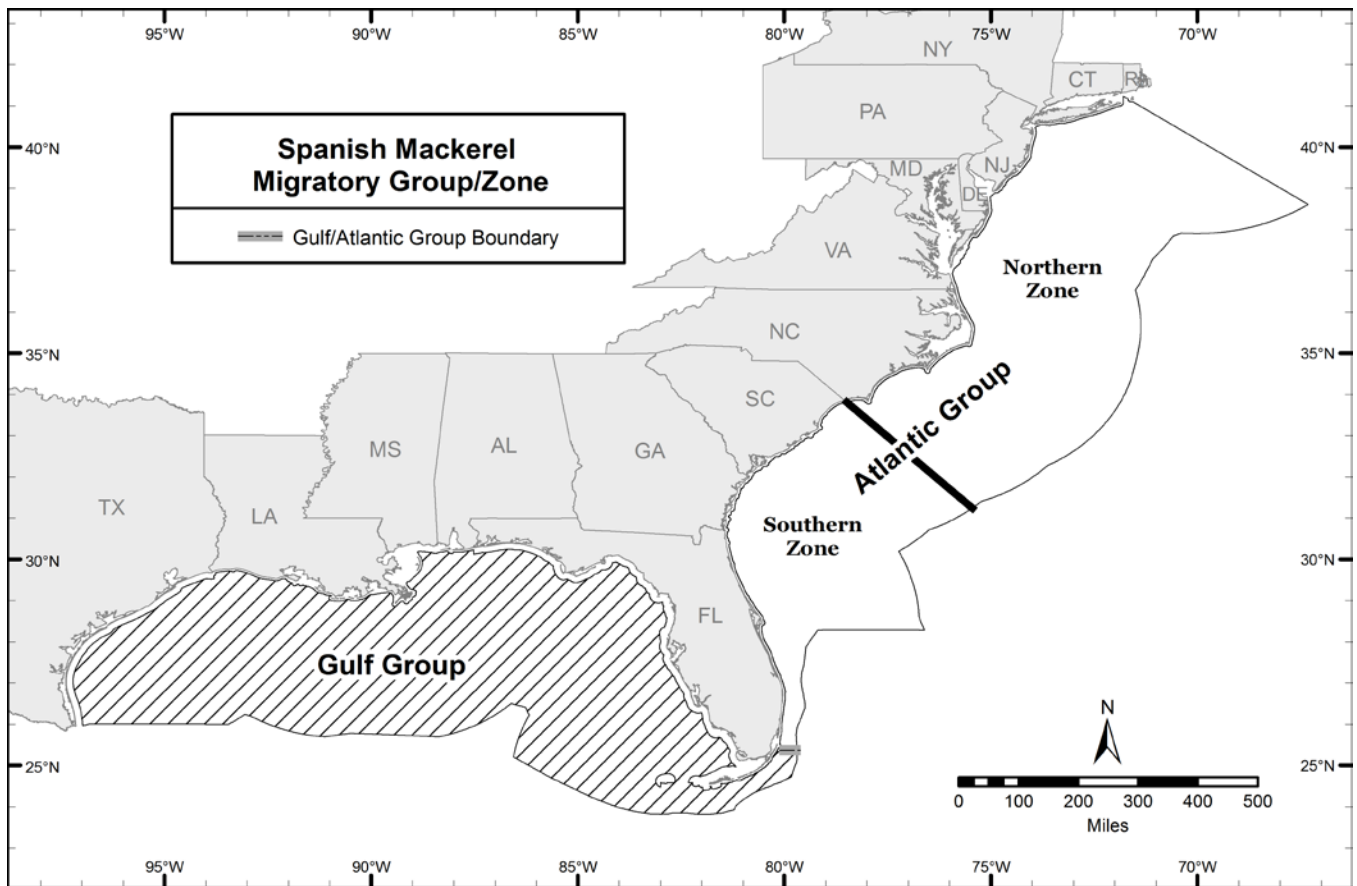


Figure S-1. Fixed boundary between Atlantic and Gulf migratory groups of Spanish mackerel, with the proposed Northern and Southern Zones in the Atlantic Group (pending submission and approval of CMP Amendment 20B).

ACTION: Modify the system of quota and trip limit adjustments for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Retain the current quota system for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel, whereby the fishing year begins March 1 and management measures are different for Florida waters and for the other states. At present the commercial ACL for Atlantic Spanish mackerel is 3.13 million pounds (mp), and the adjusted quota is 2.88 mp. [Upon submission and approval of Framework Amendment 1, the commercial ACL will be 3.33 mp and the adjusted quota would be 3.08 mp.] Currently for commercial harvest in the Florida EEZ, the trip limit is 3,500 pounds starting March 1, and then starting December 1 trips are not limited on week days and are 1,500 pounds on weekends. This unlimited time period continues until 75 percent of the adjusted quota is landed, after which the trip limit is 1,500 pounds every day. When 100 percent of the adjusted quota is reached, the trip limit is reduced to 500 pounds until the end of the fishing year or until the full quota is met or projected to be met. In EEZ of the other states, the trip limit is 3,500 pounds year-round.

	Florida waters	Rest of the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic
March 1- Nov 30	3,500 lbs	3,500 lbs
Dec 1- Feb 28(29)	No limit if 0-74% adjusted quota has been landed weekdays, 1,500 lbs weekends	3,500 lbs
	1,500 lbs if 75-99% adjusted quota has been landed	
	500 lbs if 100% adjusted quota has been landed	
	0 lbs if 100% quota has been landed	0 lbs if 100% quota has been landed

Alternative 2. Remove all trip limit changes for the southern zone. The trip limit would remain 3,500 lbs year-round. Close commercial harvest of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel when the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met.

Alternative 3. Remove the period of unlimited trips for the southern zone that starts December 1 each year. The southern zone trip limit would start at 3,500 pounds on March 1 of each year. When 75% of the commercial ACL has been landed or projected to be landed the trip limit would be reduced to 1,500 pounds. Close commercial harvest of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel when the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met.

Alternative 4. Remove the period of unlimited trips for the southern zone that starts December 1 each year. The southern zone trip limit would start at 3,500 pounds on March 1 of each year. When 75% of the commercial ACL has been landed or projected to be landed the trip limit would be reduced to 500 pounds. Close commercial harvest of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel when the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met.

AP Recommendation from April 2012: Alternative 5. Retain the adjusted commercial ACL but remove the period of unlimited trips for the southern zone that starts December 1 each year. The southern zone trip limit would start at 3,500 pounds on March 1 of each year. When 75% of the adjusted commercial ACL has been landed or projected to be landed the trip limit would be reduced to 1,500 pounds. When 100% of the adjusted commercial ACL is reached, the trip limit is reduced to 500

pounds until the end of the fishing year or until the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met. Close commercial harvest of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel when the commercial ACL is met or projected to be met.

ALT 1	Florida EEZ
March 1- Nov 30	3,500 lbs
Dec 1- Feb 28(29)	No limit if 0-74% adjusted quota has been landed weekdays, 1,500 lbs weekends
	1,500 lbs if 75-99% adjusted quota has been landed
	500 lbs if 100% adjusted quota has been landed
	0 lbs if 100% quota has been landed

ALT 2	Florida EEZ
March 1- Nov 30 Feb 28 Dec 1- Feb 28(29)	3,500 lbs
	No limit if 0-74% adjusted quota has been landed weekdays, 1,500 lbs weekends
	1,500 lbs if 75-99% adjusted quota has been landed
	500 lbs if 100% adjusted quota has been landed
	0 lbs if 100% quota has been landed

ALT 3	Florida EEZ
March 1- Feb 28 Nov 30 Dec 1- Feb 28(29)	3,500 lbs
	No limit if 0-74% adjusted quota has been landed weekdays, 1,500 lbs weekends
	1,500 lbs when 75% of adjusted quota commercial ACL has been landed
	0 lbs when 100% quota commercial ACL has been landed

ALT 4	Florida EEZ
March 1- Feb 28 Nov 30 Dec 1- Feb 28(29)	3,500 lbs
	No limit if 0-74% adjusted quota has been landed weekdays, 1,500 lbs weekends
	500 lbs when 75% of adjusted quota commercial ACL has been landed
	0 lbs when 100% quota commercial ACL has been landed

ALT 5 (AP rec)	Florida EEZ
March 1- Feb 28 Nov 30 Dec 1- Feb 28(29)	3,500 lbs
	No limit if 0-74% adjusted quota has been landed weekdays, 1,500 lbs weekends
	1,500 lbs when 75% of adjusted quota has been landed
	500 lbs when 100% of adjusted quota has been landed
	0 lbs when 100% quota commercial ACL has been landed

The following table was included in earlier versions of the previous amendment with this action (South Atlantic Framework Action 2013). For Framework Amendment 2, the data will be updated and the information may be different than what is provided below.

Table 1. Projected fishing days and closure dates for the 2014-2015 fishing season for each alternative.

Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5
Projected Closure Date	February 15, 2015	January 28, 2015	February 5, 2015	No Closure	February 15, 2015
Projected Fishing Days	351	333	341	365	351

(Source: NMFS 2013)