Mackerel Amendment 26
Public Comments Summary
January/February 2016

This summary includes comments received at the public hearing in Cocoa Beach on February 3, 2016, on the webinar hearing on February 8, 2016, and one written comment from Directed Sustainable Fisheries on behalf of king mackerel industry stakeholders.

Overall:
- Set the ACL = ABC under high recruitment
- There are lots of small fish; all age classes and high recruitment period
- Have a March 1 opening with 75-fish trip limit
- Support for the split season for the Southern Zone
- Increased allocation for the Gulf Northern Zone (panhandle)
- Concerns about the king mackerel gillnet sector in the Keys

Action 1: stock boundary
- Three comments in support of Preferred Alternative 3.

Action 2-1 and 2-2: Atlantic king mackerel ABC and ACL
- Several commenters supported setting the ACL= ABC under the high recruitment. The stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The fishermen report that there are lots of small fish and that the way the Council is specifying recruitment [as not in a high period] is incorrect.

Action 3: incidental catch allowance for shark gillnets
- The written comment supported the preferred alternative.

Action 4: split season quotas for the Southern Zone
- Many commenters supported the opening date of March 1 for season 1.
- Some commenters supported split season quotas under Alternative 2 (60/40) or with 70/30 split seasons.

Action 5: trip limits for the Southern Zone
- Several commenters supported Alternative 2 and Alternative 4/Option 4a as the preferred alternatives. This would set the season 1 trip limit at 75 fish with no step-down, and the season 2 trip limit at 50 fish with a possible step-up in February.
- One commenter supported 75 fish in season 2 with a step-down to 50 fish.
- One commenter raised concern about not having the 3500-lb trip limit in Volusia in season 1, because of the year-round boundary proposed at the Flagler/Volusia line.

Action 6: Gulf king mackerel ACL
- The written comment supported the preferred alternative.
- A few commenters voiced concern that the Gulf ACL is being set to the ABC, and it was unfair that the Atlantic ACL would not also be set to the ABC.

Action 7: Gulf commercial zone quotas
- Several commenters supported a larger allocation for the Gulf Northern Zone, because the zone has always had a small allocation and there should be more quota in the zone to support a longer season.
- Several commenters voiced concern that the Southern Zone Gillnet allocation was unfair, and that the gillnets should be phased out.
- The written comment supported Alternative 4 as the preferred.

Action 8: Gulf recreational and commercial allocations
- One commenter supported moving some recreational ACL to the commercial ACL.
- The written comment supported Alternative 4/Option 4a/Option 4e as the preferred alternative and options.

Action 9: Gulf bag limit
-The written comment supported Alternative 2 (three fish/day) as the preferred.

Other comments
- NMFS should work with fishermen to get data on the small fish, or bring back small fish under an EFP.
- Allow bag limit sales for king and Spanish mackerel caught on charter trips.
- Allow electronic reporting for the commercial sector.
- Do not separate the FMPs- each Council serves as a check-and-balance for the other.
- Concerns about environmental factors affecting king mackerel, including upwellings and pollution