

**DECISION DOCUMENT**  
for  
**COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS  
FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT 2**  
**(Commercial trip limits for  
Atlantic Spanish mackerel  
in the Southern Zone)**



**September 5, 2014**

**South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
Mackerel Committee  
Charleston, SC  
September 2014**

**Background**

The trip limit and quota system for commercial harvest of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel was first implemented in Amendment 6 (1992) with modifications in subsequent framework actions (1996; 2000; 2007). However, fishery conditions and the regulations for Spanish mackerel have been through many changes since the system has been in place. When the most recent trip limits were implemented, the total allowable catch (TAC) for commercial harvest of Atlantic Spanish mackerel was 3.87 million pounds (mp). The current commercial ACL, set in Amendment 18 (2011) is 3.13 mp, and the South Atlantic 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, the lack of a Spanish mackerel trip limit in waters off Florida on weekdays beginning December 1 may contribute to early closures in the spring under the 3.13 mp ACL.

The adjusted quota (250,000 lbs below the specific commercial annual catch limit (ACL)) was calculated based on the number of vessels and the catch rates at that time, and was intended to allow small vessels to catch 500 lbs after the adjusted quota was caught. However, both the number of vessels and the catch rates have changed in the past 20 years and may have reduced the effectiveness and necessity of the adjusted quota.

Lastly, Amendment 20B proposes to establish a Northern Zone and a Southern Zone at the North Carolina/South Carolina boundary, with separate commercial quotas for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel. To reduce complexity within the proposed Southern Zone by having consistent trip limits across the entire zone, the South Atlantic Council is considering changes to the trip limit system that will apply to South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

**Expected Schedule**

September 2014 –South Atlantic Council reviews public comments, considers submission for Secretarial Review

October 2014 - Gulf Council reviews and approves for Secretarial Review

October 31, 2014 – Send for Secretarial Review by end of October

Early 2015 – Implementation

**Table 1.** Current Trip Limits for Atlantic group Spanish mackerel

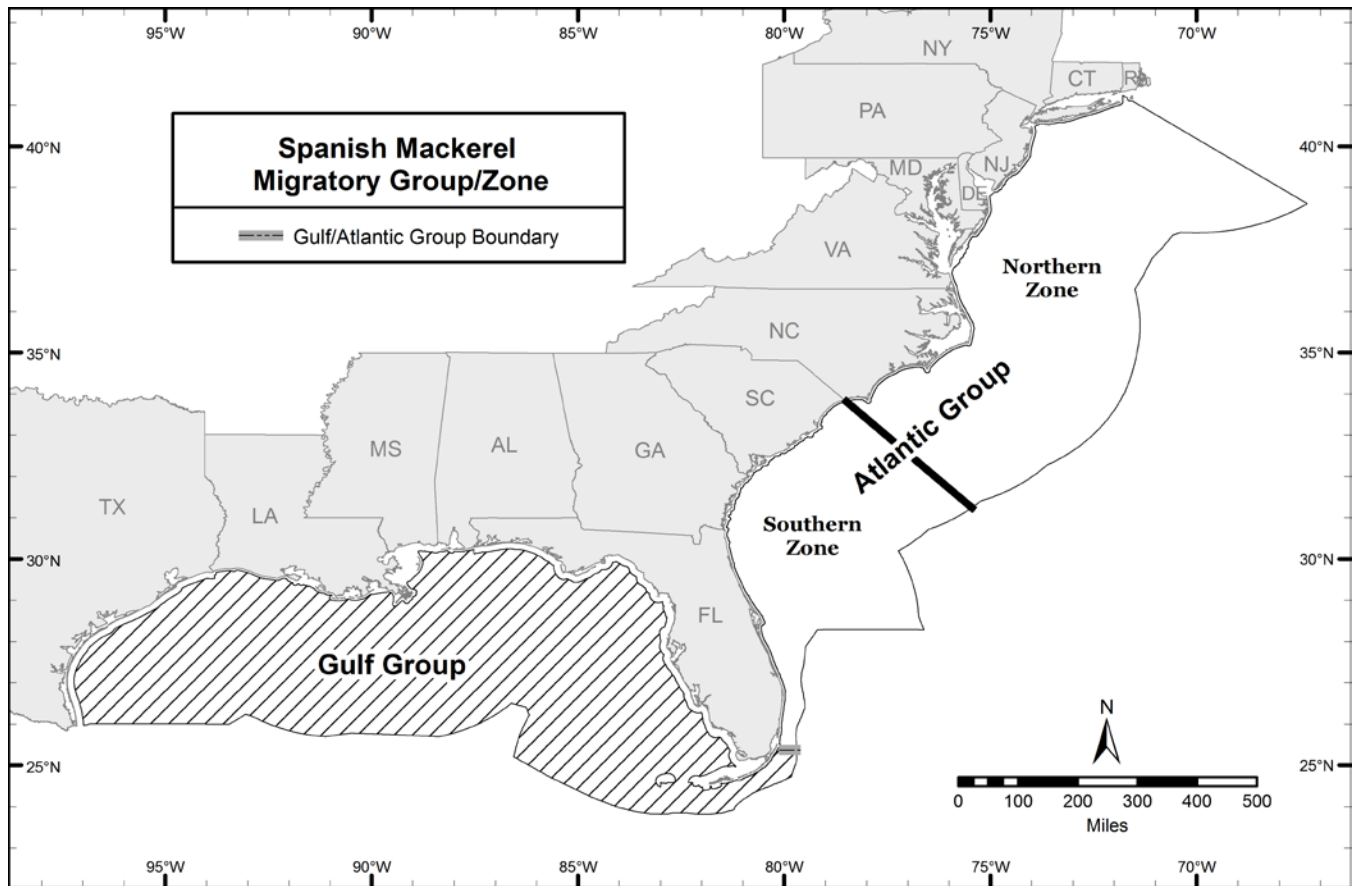
|                   | North of GA/FL boundary | Florida   |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| March 1- Nov 30   |                         | 3,500 lbs   |
| Dec 1- Feb 28(29) | 3,500 lbs               | No limit if 0-74% adjusted quota has been landed weekdays, 1,500 lbs weekends |
|                   |                         | 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   |

**Table 2.** Recent ACLs and proposed ACLs (Framework Amendment 1) for Atlantic group Spanish mackerel

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

**Table 3.** Proposed quotas for Atlantic group Spanish mackerel in the proposed Northern and Southern Zones

| <b>Proposed 20B Zones</b>                             | <b>Northern Zone Quota</b> | <b>Southern Zone Quota</b> |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Proposed Comm ACL<br/>2014-2016<br/>= 6.063 MP</b> | 662,670 lbs                | 2,667,330 lbs              |



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

## **Purpose and Need**

### **Purpose for Actions**

The purpose of this amendment is to modify the current trip limit system for commercial harvest of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel in the proposed Southern Zone.

**IPT RECOMMENDATION:** The purpose of this amendment is to ensure the system of trip limits for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel in the proposed Southern Zone is aligned with the current conditions of the fishery through proposed modifications to the current system of trip limits in place for the species.

### **Need for Action**

The need for this amendment is to tailor the trip limit system for the proposed Southern Zone to current conditions in the fishery and the new catch limits, while increasing social and economic benefits of the CMP fishery through sustainable and profitable harvest of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel.

**IPT RECOMMENDATION:** The need for this amendment is to respond to new regulations and changing fishery characteristics for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel in the proposed Southern Zone, while increasing social and economic benefits of the CMP fishery through sustainable and profitable harvest of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel in accordance with provisions set forth in Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act.

| <b>COMMITTEE ACTION</b>                                      |
|--|
| Approve the language suggestion from the IPT in the Purpose. |

**Option 1. Approve the modified language for the Purpose as suggested by the IPT.**

**Option 2. Do not approve the modified language for the Purpose as suggested by the IPT.**

**Option 3. Others?**

## History of Trip Limits for Atlantic Spanish mackerel

### History

- Amendment 6 (1992) - set up the trip limits with the current trip limit for north of the GA/FL boundary; and the Florida trip limit system using the adjusted quota, periods with unlimited trips, and step-downs
- Framework September 1996 – adjustments to when the unlimited trips could occur; implemented July 1997
- Framework July 1999- set up the current system but with the fishing year starting in April; implemented July 2000
- Amendment 15 (2004) - changed fishing year to start March 1
- Framework January 2008- adjusted the system to start the changing trip limits on December 1 through the end of the season

### Step-downs

- 1000-lb in 1993, 1994, 1995
- 1500-lb in 1997, 1999, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007
- 500-lb trip limit only in 1993, 1994, 1995, 2005

Recent years with the current system (to 1,500 lbs when 75% of adjusted quota has been met):

- February 22, 2011
- January 27, 2012
- January 6, 2013
- January 17, 2014

### Current trip limits:

|                   | <b>North of GA/FL boundary</b> | <b>Florida</b>  |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| March 1- Nov 30   |                                | 3,500 lbs   |
| 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   |

## Action: Modify the system of quota and trip limit adjustments for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel in the Southern Zone

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not modify the current system of trip limits for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel.

**Alternative 2.** Establish a trip limit of 3,500 lbs for the Southern Zone for March 1- November 30. After December 1, when 75% of the adjusted Southern Zone quota has been landed or projected to be landed, the trip limit would be reduced to 1,500 lbs.

\*75% of the current adjusted Southern Zone quota = 1,692,848 lbs

**Alternative 3.** Establish a trip limit of 3,500 lbs for the Southern Zone. When 75% of the Southern Zone commercial quota has been landed or projected to be landed, the trip limit would be reduced to 500 lbs.

75% of the current Southern Zone quota = 1,880,348 lbs

**Alternative 4.** Establish a trip limit of 3,500 lbs for the Southern Zone. When 75% of adjusted quota of the Southern Zone quota has been landed or projected to be landed, the trip limit would be reduced to 1,500 lbs. When 100% of adjusted quota of the Southern Zone quota is reached, the trip limit is reduced to 500 lbs until the end of the fishing year or until the Southern Zone commercial quota is met or projected to be met.

\*75% of the current adjusted Southern Zone quota = 1,692,848 lbs

\*100% of the current adjusted Southern Zone quota = 2,257,130 lbs

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### IPT SUGGESTIONS FOR LANGUAGE IN ALTERNATIVES 2-4

**Alternative 2.** Establish a trip limit of 3,500 lb for the Southern Zone for March 1- November 30. After December 1, when 75% of the adjusted Southern Zone quota ~~has been landed or projected to be landed~~ is met or projected to be met, the trip limit would be reduced to 1,500 lb until the end of the fishing year or until the Southern Zone quota is met or projected to be met, at which time the commercial sector in the Southern Zone would be closed to harvest of Spanish mackerel.

**Alternative 3.** Establish a trip limit of 3,500 lbs for the Southern Zone. When 75% of the Southern Zone ~~commercial~~ quota ~~has been landed or projected to be landed~~ is met or projected to be met, the trip limit would be reduced to 500 lbs until the end of the fishing year or until the Southern Zone quota is met or projected to be met, at which time the commercial sector in the Southern Zone would be closed to harvest of Spanish mackerel.

**Alternative 4.** Establish a trip limit of 3,500 lbs for the Southern Zone. When 75% of adjusted ~~quota of the~~ Southern Zone quota ~~has been landed or projected to be landed~~ is met or projected to be met, the trip limit would be reduced to 1,500 lbs. When 100% of adjusted ~~quota of the~~ Southern Zone quota is ~~reached~~ met or projected to be met., the trip limit is reduced to 500 lbs until the end of the fishing year or until the Southern Zone commercial quota is met or projected to be met, at which time the commercial sector in the Southern Zone would be closed to harvest of Spanish mackerel.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Review and approve the IPT suggestions for revised language (blue) in Alternatives 2-4.

**Option 1. Approve the IPT suggested language in Alternatives 2-4.**

**Option 2. Modify the IPT suggested language in Alternatives 2-4 and approve the revised wording.**

**Option 3. Others?**

**AP Recommendation and Public Comment**

- Mackerel Advisory Panel (April 2014) - recommended **Alternative 4**
- Public Hearings (August 2014) – One attendee supported **Alternative 4**, and also recommended the Council consider a 10% overage allowance when removing the unlimited trips. One written comment supported **Alternative 4**.
- Information about the amendment and public hearing materials were provided to the Mid-Atlantic Council for distribution. No comments were received.

**Table 4.** Comparison of trip limits for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel in Florida waters for each alternative under Action 1. **SZQ= Proposed Southern Zone Quota**

|                 | <b>Alt 1</b>   | <b>Alt 2</b>     | <b>Alt 3</b>   | <b>Alt 4</b>   | <b>Alt 5</b>   |
|-----------------|--|------------------|--|--|--|
| March 1- Nov 30 | <b>3,500 lbs</b>   |                  |  |  |  |
| Dec 1- Feb 28   | No limit if 0-74% adjusted quota has been landed weekdays, <b>1,500 lbs</b> weekends | <b>3,500 lbs</b> | <b>3,500 lbs</b> with step-down to <b>1,500 lbs</b> when 75% of SZQ is met | <b>3,500 lbs</b> with step-down to <b>500 lbs</b> when 75% of SZQ is met | <b>3,500 lbs</b> with step-down to <b>1,500 lbs</b> when 75% of adjusted SZQ is met; step-down to <b>500 lbs</b> when 100% of adjusted SZQ is met. |
|                 | <b>1,500 lbs</b> if 75-99% adjusted quota has been landed                            |                  |  |  |  |
|                 | <b>500 lbs</b> if 100% adjusted quota has been landed                                |                  |  |  |  |
|                 | <b>0 lbs</b> if 100% ACL has been landed   |                  |  |  |  |

**Table 5.** Projected fishing days and closure dates for the 2014-2015 fishing season for each alternative under Action 1 under conditions that would exist if CMP Framework 1 and CMP Amendment 20B are implemented. The fishing year is March – February.

| <b>Alternative</b>            | <b>Alternative 1</b> | <b>Alternative 2</b> | <b>Alternative 3</b> | <b>Alternative 4</b> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Projected Closure Date</b> | 2/1/15               | 1/24/15              | 2/18/15              | 1/31/15              |
| <b>Projected Fishing Days</b> | 337                  | 329                  | 354                  | 336                  |

Source: NMFS 2013

Table 4.1.1.2 in draft CMP Framework Amendment 2

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Select a Preferred Alternative.

**Option 1. Select a Preferred Alternative.**

**Option 2. Others?**

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Approve for Secretarial review.

**DRAFT MOTION:** APPROVE COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT 2 FOR SECRETARIAL REVIEW, AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND RE-DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.



**Alternatives if IPT suggestions for language are approved.**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not modify the current system of trip limits for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel.

**Alternative 2.** Establish a trip limit of 3,500 lb for the Southern Zone for March 1- November 30. After December 1, when 75% of the adjusted Southern Zone quota is met or projected to be met, the trip limit would be reduced to 1,500 lb until the end of the fishing year or until the Southern Zone quota is met or projected to be met, at which time the commercial sector in the Southern Zone would be closed to harvest of Spanish mackerel.

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