

# **SUMMARY**

## **for South Atlantic Regulatory Amendment (Framework Actions)**

**to the Joint Fishery Management Plan for Coastal  
Migratory Pelagic Resources  
of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Regions**



**Law Enforcement Advisory Panel Meeting  
Charleston, SC  
February 2013**

## **Actions in Framework**

1. Change the Atlantic group king mackerel size limit.
2. Create an exemption from the Spanish mackerel minimum size limit for pound nets.
3. Allow the addition of a portion of a third net in the Atlantic group Spanish mackerel gillnet fishery.
4. Change the king mackerel commercial trip limit in the East Coast Florida subzone.

## **Expected Schedule**

<i>March 2013</i>	Joint Gulf and South Atlantic Committee meeting to review the amendment and finalize actions and alternatives
<i>April 2013</i>	Mackerel Advisory Panel review SSC review
<i>June 2013</i>	South Atlantic Council review final analyses and approve for public hearings
<i>August 2013</i>	Public hearings
<i>September 2013</i>	South Atlantic Council review public comment, approve the amendment for submission to the Secretary
<i>Mid- 2014</i>	Implementation

### **Action 1. Change the Atlantic group king mackerel minimum size limit.**

**Background:** In late winter and early spring there is increased chance of catching undersized king mackerel and there is concern about discard mortality, and the Council is considering a reduction size limit to minimize discards. The size limit of 24 inches was established to increase likelihood that the fish reach spawning size before harvest.

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not change the Atlantic group king mackerel minimum size limit of 24 inches for commercial and recreational harvest.

**Alternative 2.** Reduce the Atlantic group king mackerel minimum size limit to 23 inches for commercial and recreational harvest.

**Alternative 3.** Reduce the Atlantic group king mackerel minimum size limit to 22 inches for commercial and recreational harvest.

**Alternative 4.** Reduce the Atlantic group king mackerel minimum size limit to 23 inches for commercial harvest only from the Georgia/Florida line south to the Miami-Dade/Monroe county line.

Q: Would this keep in place the exemption that a vessel fishing under a commercial quota for Atlantic group king mackerel may possess undersized king mackerel in quantities not exceeding 5 percent, by weight, of the king mackerel on board?

**Action 2. Create an exemption from the Spanish mackerel minimum size limit for pound nets.**

**Background:** Smaller Spanish mackerel in North Carolina waters in late summer are caught in pound nets but do not meet the 12-inch FL minimum size requirement. An exemption from the size limit during August and September would allow fishermen harvesting with pound nets to keep smaller Spanish mackerel and reduce discards.

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Do not allow Spanish mackerel under the minimum size limit of 12 inches to be harvested.

**Alternative 2.** Create an exemption to allow Spanish mackerel under the minimum size limit of 12 inches to be harvested in North Carolina waters with pound nets during August and September.

**Alternative 3.** Create an exemption to allow Spanish mackerel under the minimum size limit of 12 inches to be harvested in the South Atlantic region with pound nets during August and September.

**Action 3. Allow the addition of a portion of a third net in the Atlantic group Spanish mackerel gillnet fishery.**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** No more than two gillnets, including any net in use, may be possessed at any one time; provided, however, that if two gillnets, including any net in use, are possessed at any one time, they must have stretched mesh sizes (as allowed under the regulations) that differ by at least .25 inch (.64 cm).

**Alternative 2.** Allow the addition of a portion of a third net in the Atlantic group Spanish mackerel gillnet fishery.

**Action 4. Change the king mackerel commercial trip limit in the East Coast Florida subzone.**

**Background:** The percentage of quota reached by king mackerel commercial landings in the past few years has decreased. There is concern that the stock may be in decline and changes to the trip limits and other regulations may be necessary.

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** In the Florida east coast subzone, king mackerel in or from the EEZ may be possessed on board at any time or landed in a day from a vessel with a commercial permit for king mackerel as follows:

- (A) From November 1 through January 31--not to exceed 50 fish.
- (B) Beginning on February 1 and continuing through March 31--
  - (1) If 75 percent or more of the [Gulf group] Florida east coast subzone quota has been taken-- not to exceed 50 fish.
  - (2) If less than 75 percent of the [Gulf group] Florida east coast subzone quota has been taken --not to exceed 75 fish.
- (C) From April 1through October 31—not to exceed 75 fish.

**Alternative 2-** Change the king mackerel commercial trip limit in the East Coast Florida subzone to 50 fish all season.

**Table 1.** Percentage of Atlantic Group King Mackerel quota landed in the past ten years. Source: SERO Mackerel Quota Reports.

Fishing Year	% of King Mackerel Quota Landed for Atlantic Group King Mackerel
2002-03	44.7%
2003-04	52.8%
2004-05	66.9%
2005-06	57.9%
2006-07	90.8%
2007-08	71.1%
2008-09	77.6%
2009-10	94.8%
2010-11	72.5%
2011-12	54.8%

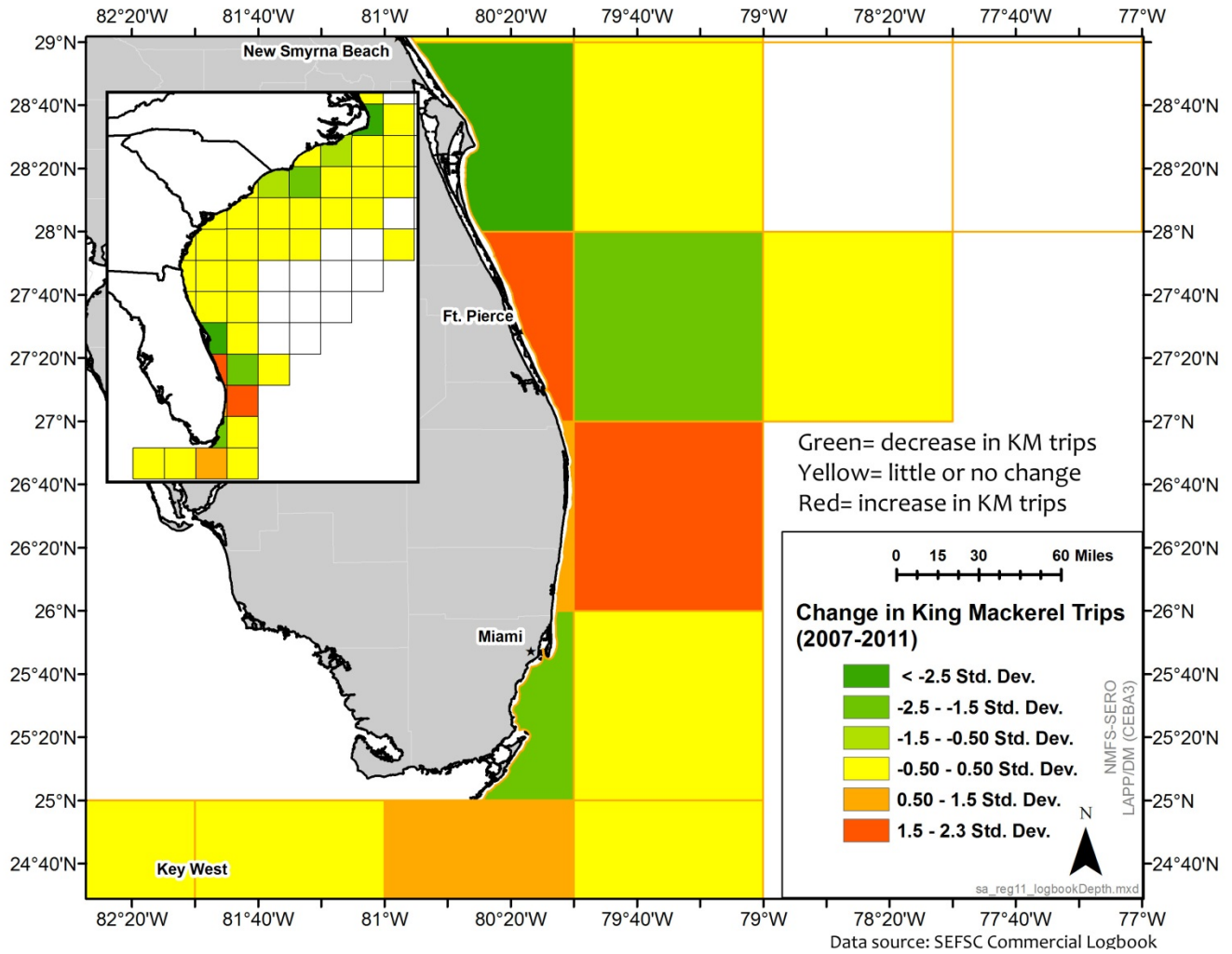
\*Atlantic King Mackerel commercial quota= 3,710,000 lbs

**Table 2.** Percent of the Atlantic Group king mackerel quota caught by the end of each month (cumulative landings). Source: Southeast Fisheries Science Center (2007-08 through 2011-12) and SERO Mackerel reports (2012-13)

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
<b>March</b>	0.5%	2%	3%	3%	0.35%	0.65%
<b>April</b>	14%	11%	14%	22%	11%	3%
<b>May</b>	25%	29%	37%	35%	29%	12%
<b>June</b>	31%	39%	49%	47%	37%	17.6%
<b>July</b>	36%	47%	59%	52%	40%	19.8%
<b>August</b>	46%	56%	75%	65%	43%	21.9%
<b>September</b>	48%	58%	79%	66%	45%	--
<b>October</b>	53%	64%	85%	68%	46%	---
<b>November</b>	60%	73%	91%	70%	52%	--
<b>December</b>	69%	77%	94%	71%	54%	44.1%
<b>January</b>	71%	77%	95%	72%	55%	
<b>February</b>	71%	78%	95%	73%	55%	

**Table 3.** Number of unique vessels reporting commercial landings of South Atlantic king mackerel by year (2007-2011). Source: SEFSC Commercial Logbook (accessed April 2012).

<b>Fishing Year</b>	<b># of Vessels</b>
2007	892
2008	873
2009	899
2010	806
2011	746



**Figure 1.** 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.