



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Coastal Migratory Pelagics Framework Amendment 13

Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel catch levels

Scoping Session Date and Time

October 30th and November 1st, 2023 at 6:00pm

Registration Link and More Details

<https://safmc.net/public-hearings-and-scoping/>

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Why is the South Atlantic Council taking action?

Framework Amendment 13 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Coastal Migratory Pelagic (CMP) Resources in the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Region (CMP FMP) would change catch limits for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel (Atlantic Spanish mackerel).

The *purpose* of this amendment is to revise the acceptable biological catch, annual catch limits, annual optimum yield and recreational annual catch target for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel, based on the results of the latest stock assessment.

The *need* for this amendment is to ensure catch limits are based on the best scientific information available and to ensure overfishing does not occur in the Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel fishery.

A Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) stock assessment for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel (Atlantic Spanish mackerel) was completed in June 2022 (SEDAR 78). The SEDAR 78 indicated, consistent with the original stock status determined by SEDAR 28, that Atlantic Spanish mackerel are not overfished or undergoing overfishing.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (South Atlantic Council) Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviewed SEDAR 78 and determined that it was sufficient for providing stock status and for providing catch level recommendations using model output (but not projections). The South Atlantic Council received these catch level recommendations in June 2023 and directed staff to begin work on an amendment to the CMP FMP that would update catch levels to be consistent with the recommended catch levels and best scientific information available.

Recreational Survey Updates

In 2018, the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) adopted a new method to collect recreational fishing data. The new Fishing Effort Survey (FES) is **mailed** to a sample of households from a national database. The previous method (the Coastal Household Telephone Survey or CHTS) used **landline phones** to contact households and gather information about fishing activities from anglers.

The FES method better presents the current fishing population and is more efficient. To learn more, visit the [NOAA Fisheries Effort Improvement Website](#).



Recreational data from the updated FES have been used in recent stock assessments, including for Atlantic Spanish mackerel (SEDAR 78).

In August 2023, NOAA Fisheries published a report, [Evaluating Measurement Error in the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey](#), that summarized results from a small-scale study to evaluate potential sources of bias in the FES. The study, using data from July to December 2015, found that switching the current sequence of survey questions resulted in fewer reporting errors and illogical responses. As a result, effort estimates for shore and private boat anglers were generally 30 to 40 percent lower. NOAA Fisheries is now conducting a large-scale follow up study to gain a better understanding of differences in effort estimates between the current

survey design and revised survey designs. This study will be conducted throughout 2024, with results available the following year(s).

In September 2023, the South Atlantic Council's Mackerel Cobia Committee discussed how dependent Framework Amendment 13 is on MRIP-FES data, the federal deadlines associated with completion of the amendment, and whether they were interested in moving forward. Ultimately, the Committee chose to continue work on Framework Amendment 13 noting the importance of moving away from MRIP CHTS to FES to reduce confusion in how the recreational ACL is tracked vs. how recreational landings are estimated. Additionally, stakeholders have been awaiting an updated stock assessment for many years and updated catch levels will help guide stakeholder input during upcoming port meetings (see below) for the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.

Catch Levels Definitions

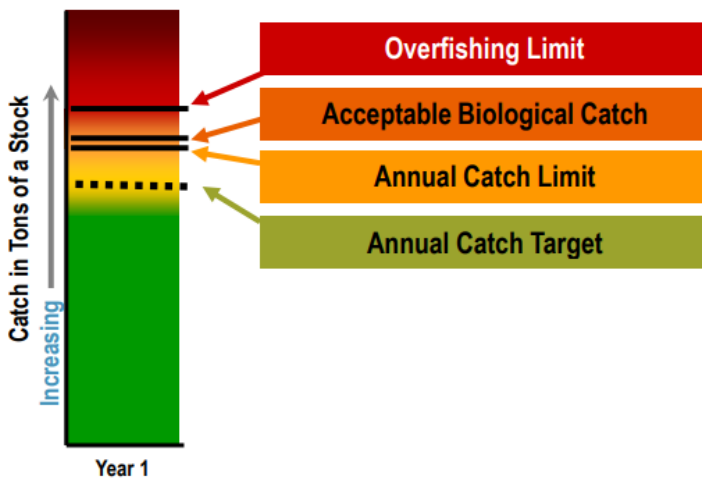
Overfishing Limit (OFL): The number or amount (usually in pounds) of fish above which fishing activities would be removing fish from the population faster than they could be replaced (i.e., overfishing would be occurring). The



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Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) determines this limit based on information from the most recent stock assessment.

Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC): The highest number or amount of fish, harvest and discards (released fish that do not survive), that can be removed from the population. The SSC recommends this level by estimating a buffer between OFL and ABC that accounts for scientific uncertainty. More uncertainty means a larger OFL-ABC buffer and a lower ABC.



Annual Catch Limit (ACL):

The limit for how many fish (or pounds of fish) can be landed in a year. The ACL is set by the South Atlantic Council and must be less than or equal to the ABC. The South Atlantic Council can set the ACL lower than the ABC to further decrease the risk of overfishing and address other fishery objectives.

Annual Catch Target (ACT): The amount of annual catch that is the management target of the fishery. The South Atlantic Council can set the ACT lower than the ACL as an accountability measure and to account for management uncertainty.

Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Management

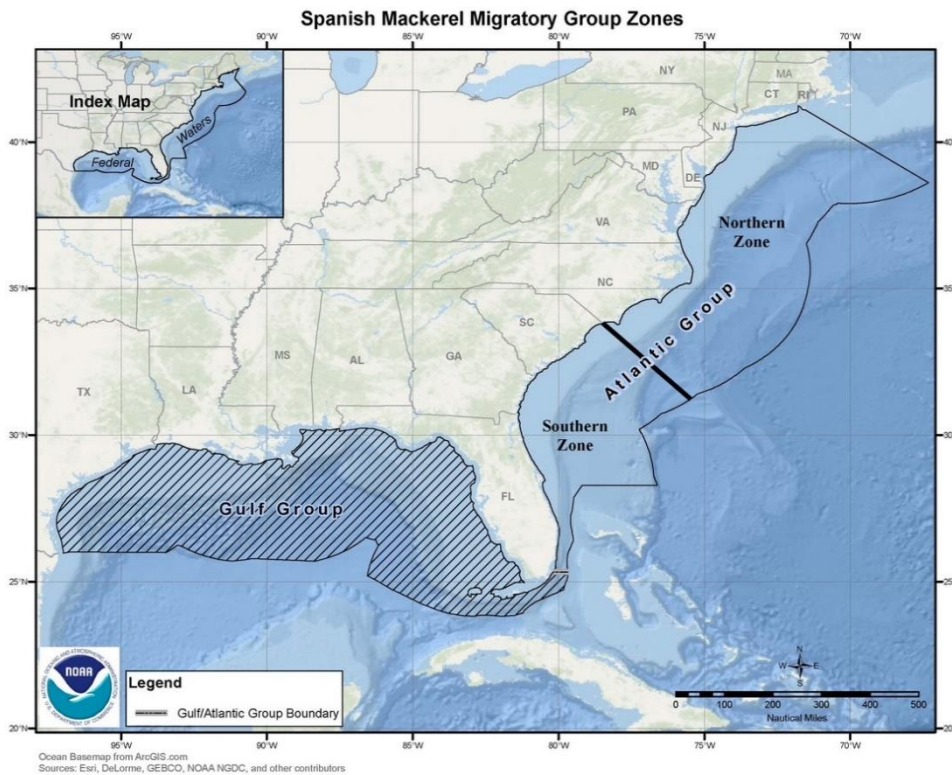
Spanish mackerel is jointly managed by the South Atlantic Council and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) through the CMP FMP. There are two separate migratory groups of Spanish mackerel, Gulf and Atlantic. This amendment only addresses Atlantic Spanish mackerel catch levels.

Click below to stay up to date with current Spanish mackerel fishing regulations and more by downloading the Fish Rules App!

FISH RULES
BY  FISHBRAIN



The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council



In the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), Atlantic Spanish mackerel is managed from a line extending east of the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line, Florida, to a line extending from the intersection point of New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.

Additionally, the commercial Atlantic Spanish mackerel fishery is divided into two

separate zones. The commercial Northern Zone extends from the New York/Connecticut/Rhode Island line to the North Carolina/South Carolina line. The commercial Southern Zone extends from the North Carolina/South Carolina line to the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line, Florida.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) coordinates management of Atlantic Spanish mackerel in state waters through their Coastal Pelagics Management Board.

Catch Level Recommendations

The Council may consider setting the Atlantic Spanish mackerel total ACL at the same level as the ABC recommended by the SSC or may consider including a buffer between the two values (Table 1).



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Table 1. Atlantic Spanish mackerel catch levels, in pounds, with different buffers between ABC and ACL.

ABC	Buffer	Total ACL	Rec. ACL	Rec. ACT	Comm. ACL	Comm. Northern Zone	Comm. Southern Zone
8,024,000	None	8,024,000	3,610,800	3,112,510	4,413,200	882,640	3,530,560
8,024,000	5%	7,622,800	3,430,260	2,956,884	4,192,540	838,508	3,354,032
8,024,000	10%	7,221,600	3,249,720	2,801,259	3,971,880	794,376	3,177,504

Current sector allocations between the commercial (55%) and recreational sector (45%) were established via a 1998 Framework Action. The commercial sector was regularly meeting or exceeding their allocation while the recreational sector was not reaching their allocation, so the South Atlantic Council shifted 5% of the sector allocation to the commercial sector (previous allocation has been 50% commercial and 50% recreational).

Current recreational ACT equation: The recreational ACT is based on adjusting the ACL by 50% or one minus the five-year average of the proportional standard error (PSE) from the recreational sector, whichever is greater. The average PSE for the last five fishing seasons (2018-2022) was 13.8%. The recreational ACT is utilized in the post-season recreational accountability measure for Atlantic Spanish mackerel. If the recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL and the sum of the commercial and recreational landings, exceeds the total ACL, the bag limit may be reduced for the following fishing year by the amount necessary to ensure recreational landings may achieve the recreational ACT, but do not exceed the recreational ACL.

Current commercial quota allocations between the Northern and Southern Zones were established in Amendment 20B to the CMP FMP and are based on

For recent commercial and recreational landings, see the [Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Fishery Overview](#).

the average proportion of landings in that zone from the 2002/2003 fishing season through the 2011/2012 fishing season.



Mackerel Port Meetings

During their April 2019 meeting and their October 2022 meeting, the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (AP) passed motions requesting the South Atlantic Council set up a series of port meetings to gather more information on the Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.



The South Atlantic Council acknowledged the importance of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the commercial and recreational king and Spanish mackerel fisheries and agreed that port meetings would provide an effective avenue to achieve that understanding.

As a result, the South Atlantic Council, with help from ASMFC and the Gulf Council, will be conducting a series of port meetings tentatively scheduled to begin in Spring 2024. On the Atlantic coast, port meetings will be held in-person from Florida to southern Massachusetts. Port meetings will be open to all members of the public (commercial, for-hire, recreational, and others) interested in discussing king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.

The South Atlantic Council intends to utilize information gathered during port meetings to update the CMP FMP Goals and Objectives and improve management of the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries. It is anticipated that port meetings would conclude at the end of 2024. Any future management action based on feedback received during port meetings could begin sometime in 2025.

Want more information on the Mackerel Port Meetings planning process? Check out the most recent [South Atlantic Council Discussion Document](#)



Tentative Amendment Timing

PROCESS STEP	DATE
✓ Council directs staff to start work on an amendment.	June 2023
✓ Council reviews options paper and approves amendment for scoping.	September 2023
Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (MC AP) makes recommendations for the Council to consider.	November 2023
Council reviews MC AP and scoping comments and approves action/alternatives to be analyzed.	December 2023
Council reviews draft amendment, selects preferred alternatives, and approves for public hearings.	March 2024
Public Hearings	Spring 2024
Council reviews the draft amendment, modifies the document as necessary, and approves for formal review.	June 2024
CMP Framework Amendment 13 transmitted for Secretarial Review.	Summer 2024
Regulations implemented	2024/2025

What are your thoughts? The South Atlantic Council wants to hear from you!

The South Atlantic Council wants to hear from you on how they should move forward with adopting catch levels for Atlantic Spanish mackerel.

1. Should the South Atlantic Council consider placing a buffer between the ABC and ACL to account for management uncertainty?
2. What information should the South Atlantic Council consider when setting catch levels for the Atlantic Spanish mackerel fishery?
3. Are there issues in the Spanish mackerel fishery that need to be addressed immediately, before port meetings have concluded?



How Do I Comment?

Comments must be received by **5:00 PM on Friday, November 10, 2023**. There are several ways that you can submit your comment to the Council including:

Comments taken during webinars

Monday, October 30, 2023 at 6 PM

Wednesday, November 1, 2023 at 6 PM

Written comments

Written comments may be read and submitted on Framework Amendment 13 using the online public comment form at the following links:

[Submit Comment](#)

[Read Public Comments](#)

Comments by mail

Send comments to: John Carmichael, Executive Director, SAFMC. 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201. N. Charleston, SC 29405

Comments by fax

843-769-4520