

For-Hire Permit Limited Entry Options Paper

At the June 2016 Council meeting, staff were directed to bring an options paper to the September 2016 meeting describing how the Council might go about establishing a limited entry system for the Coastal Migratory Pelagics, Snapper Grouper, and Dolphin Wahoo for-hire permits.

The SAFMC has considered limited entry permits in the past in the king mackerel and snapper grouper fisheries. Below are the relevant preferred actions/alternatives from past plan amendments that established limited entry permits.

King Mackerel Limited Entry Permit (CMP Amendment 15 - 2004)

- Establish a limited access system for the commercial fishery for Gulf and Atlantic group king mackerel. A commercial king mackerel limited access permit will replace the existing commercial king mackerel permit, and a separate Gulf gill-net permit will replace the current gill-net endorsement in the Gulf. All vessels with valid permits and/or endorsements on the date that this amendment is approved will be issued such permits, and they will be renewable and transferable in the same manner as currently prescribed for general permits and gill-net endorsements in the Gulf, respectively.

Gulf of Mexico for-hire limited access permits (CMP Amendment 17 - 2006)

- Establish a limited access system on for-hire reef fish and CMP permits. Permits will be renewable and transferable in the same manner as currently prescribed for such permits. The Council will have periodic reviews at least every 10 years on the effectiveness of the limited access system.

In the Gulf of Mexico For-Hire Vessel Permit Moratorium Amendment (CMP Amendment 14 – 2001) the following actions (among others) were put into effect:

- Created a new for-hire permit with endorsements for reef fish and coastal migratory pelagic species. It required that permitted vessels have a vessel decal and that all permits and/or endorsements be permanently numbered to track them through history.
- Allowed for permits/endorsements to be fully transferable with or without the vessel, but without any increase in passenger capacity.
- Established a “permanently revoked” provision in that permits not renewed within one year of their expiration would not be reissued.
- Established an appeals process that allowed individuals or corporations to appeal to the regional administrator to resolve issues related to the NMFS permit office records that pertain to initial eligibility.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 8 (1997) established a commercial limited entry permit for the snapper grouper permit. The following are actions that were put into effect for that permit:

- Permits were limited to those who could demonstrate they any landings of species in the FMU in at least one year from 1/1/1993 through 8/20/1996.
- The also had to have had a valid snapper grouper permit at any point from 2/11/1996 through 2/11/1997.
- Any vessel that landed at least 1,000 lbs of snapper grouper species in any one year between 1/1/1993 and 8/20/1996 received a transferable permit.
- Any vessel that met the criteria, but did not land at least 1,000 lbs of snapper grouper species in any one year between 1/1/1993 and 8/20/1996 received a non-transferable permit and were limited to 225 lbs maximum of snapper grouper species on any one trip.

Based on these prior actions, the following are criteria the Council may want to consider in converting the for-hire mackerel, snapper grouper, and dolphin wahoo open access permits into limited entry permit.

- Will new permits be created?
- What are the criteria for getting a limited entry permit?
 - ⇒ How many years did a vessel have to have an open access permit
 - ⇒ What years did a vessel need to have an open access permit
 - ⇒ Landings criteria
- Will there be permits that will not be transferable (e.g. SG 225 lbs permit)?
- Will limited entry permits be transferable?
 - ⇒ Can the number of allowable passengers be modified when a permit is transfered
- Will there be any endorsements tied to the limited entry permits?
- Will vessels be required to have any identifying decals or other markings?
- Will permits be permanently revoked if they are not renewed?
- Will an appeals process be set up for those who are not selected for a permit initially?

The Committee will need to give direction to staff as to how to proceed with the development of this amendment. For example, staff could develop a draft document for Committee review at the December 2016 Council meeting that could be revised and taken out for scoping in early 2017.