



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

# King and Spanish Mackerel Port Meetings

Discussion Document

March 2024

## Background

During their April 2019 meeting and their October 2022 meeting, the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (AP) passed motions requesting the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (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 how port meetings may provide an effective avenue to achieve that understanding. During their December 2022 meeting, the South Atlantic Council directed staff to begin developing a plan for conducting port meetings throughout the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Mid-Atlantic and New England regions.

In August 2023, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC; Atlantic States Commission) received an overview of the plan to conduct a series of port meetings for king and Spanish mackerel. Atlantic States Commission members are willing to participate in both the development and implementation of port meetings for the mackerel fisheries. There was wide agreement that port meetings would provide information beneficial for the management process and essentially function as pre-scoping for the forthcoming plan amendment addressing

management of Atlantic Spanish mackerel. Additionally, they recommend involving the Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Technical Committee (TC) in the planning process.

The Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Coastal Migratory Pelagic (CMP) Resources in the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Regions (CMP FMP) is a joint management plan between the South Atlantic Council and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council). The Gulf Council also received a port meetings overview during their August 2023 meeting. Gulf Council staff compared participation between public hearings and virtual tools (i.e., Fishermen Feedback, video views, and webinars) and noted the historic low participation to in-person CMP-focused meetings. Given that virtual tools seem to have a wider-reach and capture responses their constituents more efficiently, the Gulf Council recommended moving forward with a virtual approach, but also asked staff to consider ways to enhance feedback from king and Spanish mackerel fishermen during scheduled Council meetings.

The Port Meetings Planning Team met for the first time in October 2023 to discuss the best way to facilitate discussion during port meetings as well as port meeting locations. Additionally, the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel discussed meeting structure and locations at their November 2023 meeting.

## **Objectives for this Meeting:**

- Review final port meetings plan, provide input as needed.

## **South Atlantic Council Port Meeting Goals and Objectives:**

- Evaluation of current goals and objectives of the CMP FMP.
- Achieving the maximum economic and social yield from the fishery.
- Maintaining the long-term sustainability of stocks.
- Maintaining the integrity of fishing communities under climate change.
- Achieving the most equitable management structure under climate change.
- Identification of underserved communities and Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) concerns.
- Consideration of interjurisdictional management and cooperation with other councils and ASMFC.

## **Port Meeting Discussion Topics:**

- How species movement/expansion may affect future management, especially how fishermen are responding to these changes and how the permit structure may influence their behavior.
- Dynamics of the commercial fleet, including the mobility of the fleet, market flexibility, and spatial seasonality.

- Differences in how commercial fishermen interact with the fishery (travel to different areas vs. only participate in one area).
- Differences in the size of fish being targeted at different times and in different areas.
- How the commercial and recreational sectors utilize and value the king and Spanish mackerel fishery.
  - Is there a big catch and release component to the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries?
- What role do king and Spanish mackerel fishing tournaments play in the fishery? How might these tournaments be affecting the fisheries?
  - Is there acceptance/interest within the recreational industry to move towards catch and release only tournaments?
- How water quality and harmful algal blooms affecting the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.
- How king and Spanish mackerel fisheries interact with other important fisheries.
- What types of gear are currently being used in the fishery and how has this changed over time?
- How can the Council better reach underserved stakeholders and identify equity and environmental justice issues within the king and Spanish mackerel fishing communities?

## Port Meetings Timeline:

Date		Development of Port Meetings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	October 2022	Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel unanimously passes a motion requesting the Council conduct a series of port meetings to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	December 2022	South Atlantic Council reviews the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel motion and directs staff begin work on a plan to conduct port meetings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	March 2023	South Atlantic Council discusses what information they feel is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	April 2023	Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel discusses their goals and objectives for port meetings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	June 2023	South Atlantic Council reviews input from the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel and discusses their goals and objectives for port meetings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	August 2023	The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Gulf of Mexico Council are asked to participate in the development and execution of port meetings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	November 2023	Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel meets and provides input on proposed structure for port meetings and key communities to hold meetings.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	December 2023	South Atlantic Council meets and discusses proposed meeting structure and approves key locations so scheduling work can begin.
<input type="checkbox"/>	March 2024	South Atlantic Council approves final plan for conducting port meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	March 2024	Mock port meeting held with Council staff.
	<b>Date</b>	<b>Port Meetings Conducted</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	April 2024	Port Meetings conducted in: North Carolina
<input type="checkbox"/>	May 2024	Port Meetings conducted in: New England
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 2024	South Atlantic Council receives an update on port meeting progress.
<input type="checkbox"/>	July 2024	Port Meetings conducted in: South Carolina and Georgia
<input type="checkbox"/>	September 2024	South Atlantic Council receives an update on port meeting progress.
<input type="checkbox"/>	October 2024	Port meetings conducted in: Florida
<input type="checkbox"/>	November 2024	Port meetings conducted in: Mid-Atlantic
<input type="checkbox"/>	December 2024	South Atlantic Council receives an update on port meeting progress.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Throughout 2024	Gulf Council staff holds webinars to gather input from king and Spanish mackerel fishermen and updates the Gulf of Mexico Council, as appropriate.
	<b>Date</b>	<b>Summary Report Prepared</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Winter 2025	Staff conducts thematic analysis and prepares summary report.
<input type="checkbox"/>	March 2025	Final report presented to the South Atlantic Council and guidance on future actions provided.
<input type="checkbox"/>	April 2025	Final report presented to the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel

## Port Meeting Structure:

**Timing:** 6:00pm to 8:00pm.

### Materials Provided to Attendees:

- Flyer with general information on the management of king and Spanish mackerel via the Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plan.
- Flyer with information specific to the focus state including recent landings trends for both species and stock assessment results.
- Flyer with general information on the Council and the Council process.
- Flyer on the FISHstory Citizen Science Project.

### **Attendees Arriving at the Port Meeting (5:30p-6:00p):**

*Objective:* Greet attendees and learn about why they decided to attend and what they hope to get out of the night's port meeting.

There will be a welcome table near the entrance to the meeting room for staff to help attendees sign-in (similar to in-person public comment efforts) and to provide them with information flyers. Additionally, there will be two flip charts available throughout the room for attendees to write down their answers to the following questions:

1. What is one thing you hope comes out of port meetings?
2. What is one key thing the Council needs to know about king and Spanish mackerel?

### **Meeting Introduction (6:00p-6:15p)**

*Objective:* Formally welcome attendees, explain the Council's goals and objectives for port meetings, ground rules, and detail how the night will operate.

Staff will provide a brief (approximately ten-minute) presentation with room for questions about the evening to follow.

### **Breakout Groups (6:15p-6:50p):**

*Objective:* Gather information from port meeting attendees on how environmental conditions are affecting the king and Spanish mackerel fishery and what changes might be needed to the current management structure.

There will be two different breakout groups, one addressing environmental conditions and one addressing management changes. Staff will facilitate discussion and take notes on a flip chart for each group. The facilitator will walk the group through a pre-determined set of questions, allowing for modification as needed. Questions will be based on the Council's chosen objectives and discussion topics as well as input from the Port Meetings Planning Team. Note: while the CMP FMP goals and objectives and environmental justice concerns are not explicit topics during this session, they will be addressed through the questions asked about each topic.

Attendees will switch groups after 15 minutes. Notes from each group/session will be hung around the room so that attendees can see what the other groups discussed.

### **Working Break (6:50p-7:10p):**

*Objective:* Gather input from attendees on their experiences in the fishery over the years and their thoughts on the current CMP FMP goals and objectives.

New interactive charts will be hung around the room, including a chart listing the current CMP FMP goals and objectives and a timeline of the fishery. Attendees will be able to note "keep" "delete" or "modify" using green and red stickers or yellow post-its on the list of goals and

objectives. The timeline of the fishery will include post it notes where attendees can note when they got into the fishery, good years/bad years, and other noteworthy events from their perspective.

### **Sector Dynamics (7:10p-7:45p)**

*Objective:* Learn about the dynamics of the recreational and commercial sectors to better understand each sector's goals, how they execute the fishery, and what management can do to help support sector needs.

There will be two different breakout groups, one including attendees participating in the recreational sector and one including attendees participating in the commercial sector. Attendees that participate in both sectors or are part of an environmental organization may select whichever group they feel their input would be most beneficial. Staff will facilitate discussion and take notes on a flip chart for each group. The facilitator will walk the group through a pre-determined set of questions, allowing for modification as needed. Questions will be based on the Council's chosen objectives and discussion topics as well as input from the Port Meetings Planning Team.

Groups will discuss for 25 minutes, after which a group member (or staff, if no volunteer) will report on what the group discussed.

### **Wrap-Up (7:45p-8:00p):**

*Objective:* Thank attendees, recap the Council's goals and objectives for port meetings, note next steps and how attendees can stay involved in the management process.

### **Adjustments Based on Attendance**

Some port meetings may have higher or lower attendance, the following adjustments to the above agenda can be made based on the number of attendees. Staff and Council members present at each meeting will discuss, prior to the start of the meeting, whether or not it is necessary to switch to the low attendance or high attendance scenario.

#### *Low attendance (less than 10 attendees):*

Breakout groups no longer occur, instead each topic is discussed with the entire group. Timing remains the same as detailed above.

#### *High attendance (more than 30 attendees):*

Breakout groups no longer rotate throughout the room and the break will be shortened to five minutes. Each group will walk through the environmental conditions questions, management changes questions, and have an opportunity to provide input on goals and objectives/timeline interactive activities previously scheduled for intermission. New timing for breakout groups and break as follows:

- Breakout Groups:
  - Group A:
    - Environmental Conditions: 6:15p-6:35p
    - Interactive Activities: 6:35p-6:45p
    - Management Changes: 6:45p-7:05p
  - Group B:
    - Interactive Activities: 6:15p-6:25p
    - Environmental Conditions: 6:25p-6:45p
    - Management Changes: 6:45p-7:05p
    - Intermission: 7:05p-7:10p

All other timing remains the same as detailed above.

*Significantly more of one sector in attendance than the other sector:*

Sector dynamics breakout groups remain the same as it can still be beneficial to have the discussion with a small group.

## Port Meeting Locations:

Port meeting locations were identified based on input from the Port Meeting Plannings Team, the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, and the Council with the goal of holding three to four meetings in each state/region. Tentative dates were determined based on trying to avoid state and federal management agency meetings and prime fishing times such as tournament dates.

Dates	State	Meeting One	Meeting Two	Meeting Three	Meeting Four
<b>April 1-4</b>	North Carolina	Wilmington	Morehead City	Hatteras	Wanchese
<b>May 6-9 or 13-16</b>	New England	Freeport	New London	Point Judith	New Bedford
<b>July 29- August 1</b>	Georgia/South Carolina	Darien	Pooler	Charleston	Murrell’s Inlet
<b>September 30 – October 3</b>	Florida	Fort Lauderdale	Stuart	Cape Canaveral	Saint Augustine
<b>November 18-21</b>	Mid-Atlantic	Virginia Beach	<i>Heathsville</i>	Ocean City	Toms River

## Port Meeting Outreach Plan:

- Council website with information on Mackerel Port Meetings is being developed and will include:
  - Background on why the Council is conducting port meetings.
  - Goals and objectives of the port meetings.

- Port meeting dates and locations, registration links, and information on a future webinar opportunity.
- Links to flyers (described above) that can be shared.
- Brief blurb on GMFMC complementary effort
- Logos for state agencies and ASMFC, since all have been involved in planning.
- Outreach flyers for each set of port meetings that include a general summary of what the meetings will entail as well as dates and locations.
  - Emailed out to specific shops within the Council’s tackle shop database.
  - Sent with staff when conducting outreach events in a relevant area.
  - Provided to Mackerel AP members, tournament organizers, and a list of outreach contacts curated by the Port Meetings Planning Team.
- Feature article in the South Atlantic Bite on port meetings.
- New Releases from the Councils as well as ASMFC and state agencies.
- Postcards mailed out to commercial and for-hire king and Spanish mackerel permit holders.

### **Next Steps:**

- Finalize meeting venues for North Carolina and New England locations.
- Meeting of the Port Meetings Planning Team to review facilitation questions and outreach materials.
- Begin development of a structure for a webinar port meeting(s) to be held later this year.
- Outreach, outreach, outreach.

### **Council Action:**

REVIEW THE FINAL PLAN FOR MACKEREL PORT MEETINGS AND PROVIDE INPUT AS NEEDED.

APPROVE THE PORT MEETINGS PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

**DRAFT MOTION:** APPROVE THE KING AND SPANISH MACKEREL PORT MEETINGS PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION.