

Port Meetings for the Commercial and Recreational King and Spanish Mackerel Fisheries



Update Document

September 2023

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. In the past, 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, Mid-Atlantic and New England regions.

Port Meeting Details:

Focus: Gulf and Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.

- Other species (specifically Gulf cobia and little tunny) are likely to come up during discussions and staff should be prepared with information and a plan to facilitate those discussion in a way that would still provide the Council important information on those species but would not overshadow needed discussions on king and Spanish mackerel.

Attendees: Port meetings will be open to all members of the public (commercial, for-hire, recreational, and others) interested in discussing the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.

Where: As possible, port meetings should be conducted in key communities throughout the Gulf of Mexico and along the Atlantic up to the southern end of Massachusetts.

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 EEJ concerns.
 - Consideration of interjurisdictional management and cooperation with other councils and ASMFC.

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 gears are currently being used in the fishery and how has this changed over time.

Discussions with the ASMFC and GMFMC:

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

- Council staff gave the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) an overview of SEDAR 78 and plans for port meetings. ASMFC 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 functions as pre-scoping

for the forthcoming plan amendment addressing management of Atlantic Spanish mackerel.

- They recommend involving the Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Technical Committee (TC) in the planning process.
- ASMFC staff will participate on the port meetings planning team.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

- Gulf Council staff gave an overview the plan to conduct a series of port meetings for king and Spanish mackerel, noting the joint nature of the CMP FMP and the opportunity for the Gulf Council to participate.
 - 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 from our constituents more efficiently, the Gulf Council recommended moving forward with a virtual approach, but also asked staff to consider ways to enhance feedback from CMP anglers during scheduled Council meetings.
- Gulf Council staff will participate in the port meetings planning team.

Next Steps:

- Schedule the first meeting of the port meetings planning team.
 - Develop a structure for facilitating port meetings.
 - Begin identifying key areas along the coast to hold port meetings.
- Discuss CMP FMP and port meeting goals and objectives with the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel.

Updated timeline for completing port meetings:

Note: this timeline has been modified since the June 2023 meeting to reflect Council direction to begin work on a framework amendment to update catch levels, but to hold off on development of a full plan amendment to address management measures until after mackerel port meetings have been completed.

Status	Date	Task
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	December 2022	Council directs staff to organize port meetings for Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	March 2023	Council reviews detailed plan for conducting port meetings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	April 2023	Mackerel Cobia AP meeting via webinar to review plan for conducting port meetings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	June 2023	Council reviews AP member input and discusses goals and objectives for port meetings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	August 2023	Staff presents port meeting plans to Gulf Council and ASMFC.
<input type="checkbox"/>	September 2023	Council reviews port meeting input from Gulf Council and ASMFC review, and guidance provided to staff.
<input type="checkbox"/>	November 2023	Mackerel Cobia AP discusses port meeting goals and objectives.
<input type="checkbox"/>	December 2023	Council reviews planning team progress and discusses meeting facilitation methods.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Winter 2024	Mackerel Cobia AP port meetings practice run-through (?)
<input type="checkbox"/>	March 2024	Port meetings plan and schedule finalized.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spring 2024	Port meetings held throughout the Atlantic region.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Summer 2024	Port meetings held throughout the Atlantic region.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fall 2024	Port meetings held throughout the Atlantic region.
<input type="checkbox"/>	March 2025	Summary report prepared and presented to the Council.