



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

King and Spanish Mackerel Port Meetings

Discussion Document

December 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. 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 (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 Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Input.
- Provide input on port meeting structure and locations.

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 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 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?

Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Comments:

- How a uniform management structure along the Atlantic coast (state and federal waters) may be achieved.
- How much king and Spanish mackerel are being targeted by locals (recreational) and sold or consumed locally (commercial) versus how much is being targeted by tourists or being sent away from the local area.
- How severe weather (hurricanes) affect the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.
- The effect of the limited access status of the commercial king mackerel permit.
 - How are businesses choosing to operate under limited entry as the fishery changes.
 - Is there a future for short-term leasing of commercial king mackerel permits, especially considering the seasonal nature of the fishery.
- Recreational permitting and reporting should be discussed with recreational attendees to learn what would be needed for them to be comfortable with such a system.
- Ask attendees if they have noticed a change in who is participating in the commercial and recreational king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.

Tentative 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 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"/>	February 2024	Mock-port meeting held with the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel
<input type="checkbox"/>	March 2024	South Atlantic Council approves final plan for conducting port meetings.
Date		Port Meetings Conducted
<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"/>	August 2024	Port Meetings conducted in: Mid-Atlantic
<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"/>	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.

	Date	Summary Report Prepared
<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

DRAFT Port Meeting Structure:

Port meetings would be conducted in the evenings, from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Materials provided during the meeting could include a general fact sheet with room for note-taking and various tables and charts presented around the room to spur discussion.

Prelude: As stakeholders arrive at the meeting, there could be space for them to answer a question or two (ex. post-it notes to stick to a flipboard). Example questions include:

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: A very brief presentation introducing port meetings, the Council's goals and objectives, and explaining how the night will operate.

Breakout Groups: A series of breakout groups to elicit information from attendees on the various topics identified by the Council. Example breakout group categories:

1. CMP FMP Goals and Objectives
2. Environmental conditions (species movement, expansion)
3. Changes needed to the current management structure.

Break: Time for attendees to relax and have informal conversations. Also include an interactive activity, such as a sticky wall where stakeholders can note the year you got into the fishery or key events in the fisheries or a keep/remove poll for the goals and objectives in the CMP FMP.

Sector Dynamics: Two breakout groups, by sector, discussing the dynamics of each fleet. Those that do not participate in a specific sector (ex. ENGOs) can select.

Wrap-Up: Final presentation to recap port meeting goals and objectives, note the next steps/timing, and thank participants.

Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Comments:

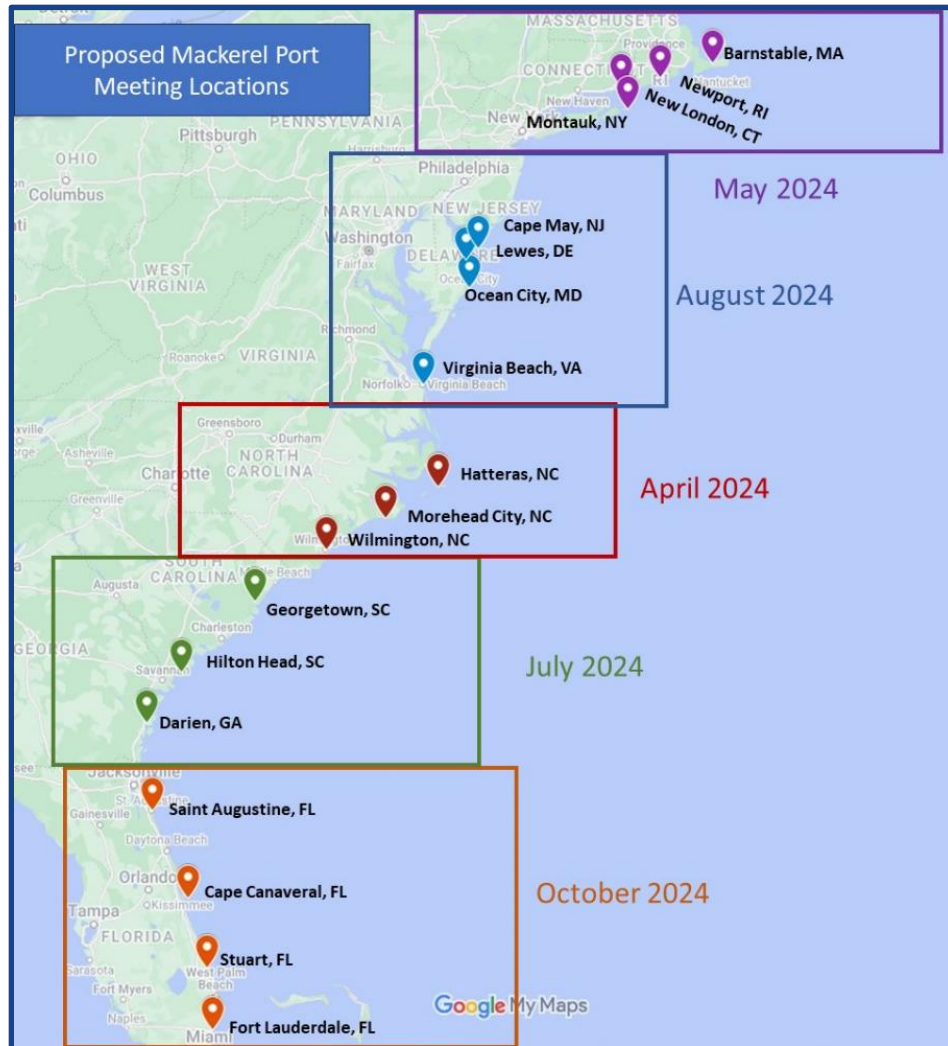
- Two-hours on a weekday evening is an appropriate amount of time to ask fishermen to attend and actively participate in a port meeting.
- Support for using breakout groups as a way to gather input from attendees.

- Breakout groups may make individuals feel more comfortable providing input and keep presentations to a minimum.
- Suggest that staff have a series of prepared questions to help get discussions started.
- Might need to consider an alternate method if meeting a has very high attendance or very low attendance because breakout groups may cause the meeting to run long or there won't be enough individuals to use breakout groups.
- AP members felt that they would be about to get a couple dozen fishermen to attend port meetings in their areas.
- Recommend using an online registration link to get an estimate of how many fishermen might attend a given port meeting.
- Create an online tool that would allow fishermen to provide input if they are unable to match their local port meeting.
 - Getting information about these port meetings out to fishermen will be incredibly important.
 - Recommendation to reach out to local chambers of commerce and other local organizations to reach underserved communities and fishermen who might not usually participate in the management process.
- Support for providing attendees with a short information sheet for them to reference during the meeting. If possible, providing access to the information sheet in advance of the meeting would be ideal. The sheet should include the following:
 - An introduction to the fishery management process.
 - Most recent stock assessment information for king and Spanish mackerel.
 - Recent commercial and recreational landings trends.

DRAFT Port Meeting Locations:

Port meeting locations were identified based on input from the Port Meeting Plannings Team and the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, with the goal of holding three to four meetings in each state/region.

Month	State	Meeting One	Meeting Two	Meeting Three	Meeting Four
April	North Carolina	Wilmington	Morehead City	Hatteras	
May	New England	Montauk	New London	Newport	Barnstable
July	Georgia/South Carolina	Darien	Hilton Head	Georgetown	
August	Mid-Atlantic	Virginia Beach	Ocean City	Lewes	Cape May
October	Florida	Fort Lauderdale	Stuart	Cape Canaveral	Saint Augustine



Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Comments:

- Proposed Florida meeting locations look sufficient, but it was noted that Fort Lauderdale is too far south for most commercial fishing effort for king and Spanish mackerel and will likely have a crowd that leans toward the recreational sector.
 - The September/October time frame would be better than May for holding port meetings in Florida.
- In South Carolina and Georgia, it was recommended that the Council consider having a meeting in Savannah instead of Hilton Head Island. Savannah has a larger recreational component and is more easily accessible to Interstate 95. Georgetown/Murrells Inlet will have attendees, but also may want to consider the Charleston area as Haddrell’s Point Tackle is known for hosting various fishing seminars and events.
- The North Carolina locations hit the three main areas; however, it might be ideal to add a meeting in Wanchese. Both Hatteras and Wanchese have large king and Spanish mackerel fisheries and due to the time and distance fishermen from one community are unlikely to travel to the other community to participate in port meetings.

- Mackerel AP members were not as familiar with the Mid-Atlantic and New England regions but did note that there was a large gap between proposed port meetings in Cape May, New Jersey and Montauk, New York. It was also noted that there is a lot of king and Spanish mackerel fishing happening in Chincoteague, Virginia, and it may be helpful to hold a meeting or two along the Chesapeake Bay.
- All AP members provided specific locations in their communities (Bass Pro Shops, tackle shops, community colleges, etc.) that may be willing to host a port meeting.