

**FINAL**  
**SUMMARY REPORT**  
**MACKEREL COBIA COMMITTEE**  
**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**Charleston, South Carolina**  
**September 12, 2023**

The Committee approved the minutes from the June 2023 meeting and the agenda.

**CMP Framework Amendment 13**

Catch level recommendations for Atlantic Spanish mackerel based on SEDAR 78 were provided to the Council in June 2023 and the Council directed staff to begin work on a framework amendment to update catch levels to be consistent with the recommendations. SEDAR 78 includes revised recreational landings that are based on the Marine Recreational Information Program's (MRIP) newer Fishing Effort Survey (FES) method.

In August 2023, the NMFS Office of Science and Technology released key findings of a pilot study to evaluate potential sources of bias in the FES questionnaire design. Due to concerns about potential bias, the Committee discussed how dependent Framework Amendment 13 is on MRIP-FES data, the federal deadlines associated completion of the amendment, and whether they were interested in moving forward with the amendment. Ultimately, the Committee chose to move forward with Framework Amendment 13 noting the importance of moving away MRIP's Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS) to FES to reduce confusion in how annual catch limits (ACL) are tracked vs. how recreational landings are estimated. Additionally, stakeholders have been awaiting an updated stock assessment for many years and the Council has noted in the past the importance of having catch levels updated in advance of conducting port meetings.

Staff presented an options paper with draft actions and alternatives and the Committee noted:

- There is a small buffer between the overfishing limit (OFL) and the acceptable biological catch (ABC) for Atlantic Spanish mackerel. The Committee felt that considering a buffer between ABC and ACL in addition to setting the two values equal to one another would be appropriate.
  - **DIRECTION TO STAFF:** ADD ALTERNATIVES THAT WOULD INCLUDE A BUFFER BETWEEN ABC AND ACL.
- The Committee was comfortable continuing to utilize the current equation used to calculate the recreational Annual Catch Target (ACT) but requested staff gather input from stakeholders on accountability measures during Mackerel Port Meetings.
- This amendment will not include modifications to sector or regional allocations. The intent is to have allocation addressed once more information has been gathered during Mackerel Port Meetings. This rationale will be added to the amendment document as it is developed.
- The amendment document will also include analysis to estimate whether the commercial and recreational sectors are anticipated to experience a closure to Atlantic Spanish mackerel harvest under the new catch level recommendations (will not be available for the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel to review in November).

- Include rationale from this meeting and the June 2023 meeting regarding sector allocations in the allocations review report for Spanish mackerel.

The following motions were approved:

**MOTION 1: APPROVE THE PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT AS PRESENTED.**

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.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**MOTION 2: APPROVE CMP FRAMERWORK AMENDMENT 13 FOR SCOPING.**

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Mackerel Port Meetings**

Based on recommendations from the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, the Council directed staff to begin work on a plan to conduct port meetings for king and Spanish mackerel to gain a comprehensive understanding of the fisheries to improve management efforts. Staff provided the Committee an update on recent discussions with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and an updated timeline for completion of Mackerel Port Meetings.

It was noted that one of the goals and objectives for port meetings is to identify underserved communities and equity and environmental justice (EEJ) concerns, but this goal is not reflected in the list of discussion topics.

- **DIRECTION TO STAFF: ADD EEJ AS A DISCUSSION TOPIC TO MATCH THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.**

**Topics for the Fall Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Meeting**

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (AP) is scheduled to meet in Charleston, SC on November 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The Committee approved the following topics for discussion:

- CMP Framework Amendment 13
  - Note FES and allocation rationale.
- Mackerel Port Meetings
  - Recommendations on port meeting locations.
- King mackerel tournament landings
- King mackerel fishery performance report
- Citizen Science update
- ‘What it Means to Me’ Program

## **Other Business**

---

Note: Council staff drafts the timing and task motion based on Committee action. If points require clarification, they will be added to the draft motion. The Committee should review this wording carefully to be sure it accurately reflects their intent prior to making the motion.

### **Timing and Task(s)**

**MOTION:** ADOPT THE FOLLOWING TIMING AND TASKS:

1. Continue work on CMP Framework Amendment 13, bringing the amendment to the Mackerel Cobia AP for discussion and holding scoping hearings prior to the December 2023 meeting.
2. Continue development of port meetings, discussing possible meeting structure and locations with the planning team and Mackerel Cobia AP. Planning team members have been requested from NC, SC, GA, and FL state agencies.
3. Convene an in-person meeting of the Mackerel Cobia AP this fall to discuss the topics listed above and note the importance of attendance.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL