

**FINAL**  
**SUMMARY REPORT**  
**MACKEREL COBIA COMMITTEE**  
**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**Wilmington, NC**  
**December 4, 2019**

The Committee approved minutes from the September 2019 meeting and the agenda.

**Status of Commercial Catches versus Quota for Species under ACLs**

The Committee received an update on commercial and recreational landings for Atlantic king mackerel, Atlantic Spanish mackerel and Florida east coast cobia from SERO staff.

**Status of Amendments Under Formal Review**

SERO staff updated the Committee on recent actions related to coastal migratory pelagics. The request for emergency action for the commercial Atlantic king mackerel fishery was sent to NMFS on June 21, 2019. The temporary increase in the Atlantic king mackerel commercial trip limit in the Atlantic southern zone was published on September 27, 2019 with an effective date of October 1, 2019. The request for a control date in the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery was sent to NMFS on June 21, 2019. NMFS published an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking on October 15, 2019. The public comment period concluded on November 14, 2019.

**Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Report**

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel met on October 7-8, 2019 in Charleston, SC. Ira Laks, AP Chair, provided a summary of the Advisory Panel discussion and recommendations.

**CMP Framework Amendment 8 (king mackerel trip limits)**

At the June 2019 meeting, based on concerns expressed by fishermen in Florida and the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, the Council requested NMFS take emergency action to increase in the commercial trip limit from 50-fish to 75-fish in the Atlantic southern zone, south of the Flagler/Volusia County line, Florida during season two of the 2019/2020 commercial fishing year. Framework Amendment 8 will permanently address season two commercial king mackerel trip limits. Staff presented a summary of public hearing comments and a final document, with updated analysis considering rollover of unused catch from season one into season two, for the Committee to consider.

The following motion was approved:

**MOTION #1: APPROVE COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT 8 FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND RE-DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.**  
**APPROVED BY COMMITTEE**  
**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

### **CMP Framework Amendment 9 (Spanish mackerel trip limits)**

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel and stakeholders have expressed concerns about participation in the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery and early closures in the Atlantic northern zone (NY through NC) and southern zone (SC to the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line, FL). At their September meeting the Council reviewed a white paper on effort in the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery and avenues to control effort, including: a limited access commercial permit, a limited access gillnet endorsement in the southern zone, and collaboration with state agencies. The Council determined that a short-term solution was necessary to prevent closures while a long-term solution (such as limited entry or revised allocations) could be developed. The Council directed staff to begin work on an amendment that would modify Spanish mackerel trip limits and accountability measures as follows: Reduce the Atlantic northern zone commercial trip limit to 2,500, 2,000, or 1,500 pounds, when the Atlantic northern zone commercial sector quota is met a stepdown to 500 pounds will occur, the Spanish mackerel fishery will close when the total ACL (commercial and recreational combined) is met or projected to be met. Staff presented a draft public hearing document for the Committee to consider.

Robert Beal, Executive Director of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), clarified that the ASMFC Interstate Fisheries Management Plan for Spanish Mackerel does not require states to close their waters to commercial harvest of Spanish mackerel when a federal closure occurs.

Based on the information provided by ASMFC, the Committee determined that it was no longer necessary to immediately address Spanish mackerel accountability measures, but that a trip limit reduction in the Northern Zone would help to extend the commercial Spanish mackerel season in federal waters. The Committee intends to review management of Spanish mackerel after the upcoming stock assessment has been completed. The Spanish mackerel operational stock assessment is currently in the planning stage and is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2021.

The following motions were approved:

**MOTION #2: APPROVE ACTION 3: ALTERNATIVES 1-2, AS MODIFIED, FOR INCLUSION IN CMP FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT 9**

**Action 3. Modify the commercial trip limits for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel in the northern and southern zones.**

**Alternative 1. (No Action).** Northern Zone. The commercial trip limit in the northern zone of the Atlantic exclusive economic zone for Spanish mackerel harvested from, possessed on board, or landed in a day, from a vessel for which a permit for Spanish mackerel has been issued is 3,500-pounds whole weight or gutted weight.

Southern Zone. The commercial trip limit in the southern zone of the Atlantic exclusive economic zone for Spanish mackerel harvested from, possessed on board, or landed in a day, from a vessel for which a permit for Spanish mackerel has been issued is 3,500-pounds whole weight or gutted weight. When 75% of adjusted southern zone quota is met or projected to be met, the trip limit would be reduced to 1,500 pounds whole weight or gutted weight. When

100% of adjusted southern zone quota is met or projected to be met, the trip limit is reduced to 500 pounds whole weight or gutted weight until the end of the fishing year or until the southern zone commercial quota is met or projected to be met, at which time the commercial sector in the southern zone would be closed to the harvest of Spanish mackerel.

**Alternative 2.** Reduce the commercial trip limit for Spanish mackerel in the northern zone of the Atlantic exclusive economic zone harvested from, possessed on board, or landed in a day, from a vessel for which a permit for Spanish mackerel has been issued.

**Sub-alternative 2a.** 2,500-pounds whole weight or gutted weight until the northern zone commercial quota has been reached or is projected to be reached, then 500 pounds whole weight or gutted weight until the end of the fishing year or until the in-season commercial accountability measures have been triggered.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** 2,000-pounds whole weight or gutted weight until the northern zone commercial quota has been reached or is projected to be reached, then 500 pounds whole weight or gutted weight until the end of the fishing year or until the in-season commercial accountability measures have been triggered.

**Sub-alternative 2c.** 1,500-pounds whole weight or gutted weight until the northern zone commercial quota has been reached or is projected to be reached, then 500 pounds whole weight or gutted weight until the end of the fishing year or until the in-season commercial accountability measures have been triggered.

**Alternative 3.** The commercial trip limit in the southern zone of the Atlantic exclusive economic zone for Spanish mackerel harvested from, possessed on board, or landed in a day, from a vessel for which a permit for Spanish mackerel has been issued is 3,500 pounds whole weight or gutted weight. When 75% of the adjusted southern zone quota is met or projected to be met, the trip limit would be reduced to 1,500 pounds whole weight or gutted weight. When 100% of adjusted southern zone quota is met or projected to be met, the trip limit is reduced to 500 pounds whole weight or gutted weight until the end of the fishing year or until the commercial sector closes as a result of in-season commercial accountability measures being triggered.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**MOTION #3:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2B AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

**Sub-alternative 2b.** 2,000-pounds whole weight or gutted weight

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**MOTION #4:** APPROVE CMP FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT 9 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

DIRECTION TO STAFF TO SEND THE PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT BACK TO THE IPT FOR REVIEW

### **Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary AP Input**

During a joint advisory panel webinar on October 29, 2019, the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel received a presentation on changes proposed in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Restoration Blueprint. The AP member in attendance did not feel comfortable providing comment as he does not regularly fish in the Florida Keys. The management boundary between Atlantic and Gulf king and Spanish mackerel is the Miami-Dade/Monroe County, Florida line. As a result, the South Atlantic Council's Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel does not have any members who currently reside in the Florida Keys.

### **Other Business**

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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. Prepare CMP Framework Amendment 8 for submission to the Secretary of Commerce.
2. Conduct public hearings for CMP Framework Amendment 9 via webinar prior to the March 2020 Council meeting.
3. Continue work on CMP Framework Amendment 9 and prepare a final draft for the approval at the March 2020 Council meeting.

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**