

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
MACKEREL COBIA COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Webinar
March 2, 2021

The Committee approved minutes from the December 2020 meeting and the agenda.

Coastal Migratory Pelagics Amendment 34 - Updates to king mackerel management based on SEDAR 38 Update 2020

At the June 2020 meeting the Council directed staff to begin work on an options paper that would include consideration of sector allocations and catch level adjustments based on SSC recommendations and the recent stock assessment update. Scoping for the amendment was held during the public comment period associated with this Council meeting. The Committee reviewed a draft options paper and considered potential topics to include in the amendment. Staff noted that because this amendment was considering revisions to sector allocations and the requirement to land fish with heads and fins intact it would need to be a full plan amendment. As such, these management actions will now be contained in Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP) Amendment 34 and will be a joint amendment with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council). The Committee provided the following comments on the range of actions and alternatives:

- Consider a smaller range of buffers between the Atlantic king mackerel ABC and ACL (10% and 5%).
- Landings data from 1979-1983 is no longer supported and should not be used to set allocations.
- The Committee clarified that they would like to consider an allocation alternative that would hold the commercial sector poundage during the 2026/2027+ season equal to the commercial sector poundage in the 2020/2021 season.
- The CFR needs to be examined to determine if cut/damaged fish caught under the recreational bag limit can be possessed and landed if they comply with minimum size limits. NOAA GC will clarify at Full Council.

NOAA GC Clarification: language regarding cut up fish does not apply to recreational sector.

The following motions were approved:

MOTION 1: APPROVE THE PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT

The *purpose* of this amendment is to revise the annual catch limits for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel; to revise recreational and commercial allocations for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel; and to revise or establish management measures for Atlantic migratory group king and Spanish mackerel.

The *need* for this amendment is to ensure annual catch limits are based on the best scientific information available and to ensure overfishing does not occur in the Atlantic migratory group

king and Spanish mackerel fisheries, while increasing social and economic benefits through sustainable and profitable harvest of Atlantic migratory group king and Spanish mackerel.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 2: APPROVE ACTION 1 AND ALTERNATIVES 1 THROUGH 4 FOR INCLUSION IN CMP AMENDMENT 34.

Action 1. Revise the total annual catch limit for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel to reflect the updated acceptable biological catch level.

Alternative 1 (No Action). The total annual catch limit for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel is set equal to the current acceptable biological catch level (12,700,000 pounds).

Alternative 2. The total annual catch limit for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel is equal to the updated acceptable biological catch level.

Alternative 3. The total annual catch limit for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel is equal to 95% of the updated acceptable biological catch level.

Alternative 4. The total annual catch limit for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel is equal to 90% of the updated acceptable biological catch level.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 3: APPROVE ACTION 3 AND ALTERNATIVES 1 THROUGH 4 FOR INCLUSION IN CMP AMENDMENT 34.

Action 3. Revise recreational annual catch target for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Retain the current recreational annual catch target for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel [$ACL[(1-PSE) \text{ or } 0.5]$, whichever is greater] based on the previous acceptable biological catch (ACT = 7,400,000 pounds)

Alternative 2. Revise the recreational annual catch target to reflect updated acceptable biological catch level. The recreational annual catch target equals sector $ACL[(1-PSE) \text{ or } 0.5]$, whichever is greater].

Alternative 3. Revise the recreational annual catch target to reflect updated acceptable biological catch level. The recreational annual catch target equals 90% sector ACL.

Alternative 4. Revise the recreational annual catch target to reflect updated acceptable biological catch level. The recreational annual catch target equals 85% sector ACL.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 4: APPROVE ACTION 4 AND ALTERNATIVES 1 THROUGH 2 FOR INCLUSION IN CMP AMENDMENT 34.

Action 4. Increase the recreational bag and possession limit for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel in the exclusive economic zone off Florida.

Alternative 1 (No Action). The daily bag limit for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel in the exclusive economic zone off Florida is two fish per person. Two fish per person is the daily bag limit specified by Florida for its waters.

Alternative 2. Increase the daily bag limit for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel to three fish per person. off Florida.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 5: APPROVE ACTION 5 AND ALTERNATIVES 1 THROUGH 4 FOR INCLUSION IN CMP AMENDMENT 34.

Action 5. Reduce the minimum size limit for recreational and commercial harvest of Atlantic migratory group king mackerel.

Alternative 1 (No Action). The minimum size limit for commercial and recreational harvest of Atlantic migratory group king mackerel is 24-inches fork length.

Alternative 2. Reduce the minimum size limit for commercial and recreational harvest of Atlantic king migratory group mackerel to 22-inches fork length.

Alternative 3. Reduce the minimum size limit for commercial and recreational harvest of Atlantic migratory group king mackerel to 20-inches fork length.

Alternative 4. Remove the minimum size limit for commercial and recreational harvest of Atlantic migratory group king mackerel.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 6: APPROVE ACTION 6 AND ALTERNATIVES 1 THROUGH 2 FOR INCLUSION IN CMP AMENDMENT 34.

Action 6. Modify the recreational requirement for Coastal Migratory Pelagic species in the Atlantic region to be landed with heads and fins in intact.

Alternative 1 (No Action). Cut-off (damaged) Atlantic migratory group king mackerel or Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel caught under the recreational bag limit may not be possessed.

Alternative 2. Cut-off (damaged) fish caught under the recreational bag limit, that comply with the minimum size limits, may be possessed, and offloaded ashore.

Sub-alternative 2a. Atlantic migratory group king mackerel

Sub-alternative 2b. Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

The following direction to staff was provided:

DIRECTION TO STAFF TO MODIFY ALTERNATIVE 3 (ACTION 2- ALLOCATIONS) TO CONSIDER MULTIPLE TIME PERIODS (LONG TERM, SHORT TERM, BOTH) CONSIDERING WHEN TAC/ACL MAY HAVE BEEN RESTRICTIVE IN THE PAST.

Coastal Migratory Pelagics Amendment 32 - Updates to Gulf cobia management based on SEDAR 28 Update 2020 and the CMP Framework Procedure

An update to SEDAR 28 assessment for Gulf cobia was completed in July 2020. The results that Gulf cobia is undergoing overfishing, which puts the stock at risk of becoming overfished without management action. The Gulf SSC reviewed the results of the updated SEDAR 28 and provided recommendations for new ABCs for Gulf cobia. Council staff presented draft management measures to end overfishing of Gulf cobia and update the CMP framework procedures to clarify language about the responsibilities of the South Atlantic and Gulf Councils. Discussion had during the Gulf Council’s January 2021 meeting were also covered.

- Consider separating the action dealing with possession and vessel limits (Action 4) into two separate actions for clarity.
- Create a table and provide examples of actions that can be taken by each Council under the proposed revisions to the framework procedure (Action 6).

The following motions were approved:

MOTION 7: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2, UNDER ACTION 1, AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Action 1 – Modify the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) Migratory Group Cobia (Gulf Cobia) Overfishing Limit (OFL), Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), and Annual Catch Limit (ACL).

Gulf Council Preferred Alternative 2: Modify the Gulf cobia stock OFL, ABC, and ACL based on recommendation of the Gulf Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) as presented in July 2020, for an increasing yield stream for 2021 to 2023, and then maintain the 2023 levels for subsequent fishing years or until changed by a management action. The stock ACL is set equal to the stock ABC.

	Gulf Cobia Stock		
Year	OFL	ABC	ACL
2021	3,030,000	2,340,000	2,340,000
2022	3,210,000	2,600,000	2,600,000
2023+	3,310,000	2,760,000	2,760,000

Note: Catch limits in pounds whole weight. The recreational portion of the OFL, ABC, and ACL are based on MRIP-FES data.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 8: CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE 3, UNDER ACTION 2, AS THE SOUTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL'S PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Action 2 – Modify the Gulf Cobia Apportionment Between the Gulf Zone and the Florida East Coast (FLEC) Zone and Update the Zones' ACLs Based on the ACL Selected in Action 1.

Alternative 3: Modify the Gulf cobia stock ACL apportionment to be 63% for the Gulf Zone and 37% for the FLEC Zone, based on the MRIP-FES average landings for Gulf cobia for the years 1998 – 2012, and use this apportionment to update the Zone ACLs based on the Gulf Cobia ACL(s) in Action 1.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 9: UNDER ACTION 4, CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE 2B AND ALTERNATIVE 3B-SUB-OPTION I AS PREFERRED.

Action 4 – Modify the Gulf Cobia Possession Limit and/or Establish a Trip Limit

Alternative 2: Reduce the recreational and commercial daily possession limit to 1 fish per person, regardless of the number or duration of trips.

Option 2b: in the FLEC Zone

Alternative 3: Create a recreational and commercial daily trip limit. Fishermen may not exceed the per person daily possession limit.

Option 3b: in the FLEC Zone

Sub-option i: The trip limit for cobia is two fish.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 10: APPROVE THE GULF COUNCIL PREFERRED FOR THE GULF ZONE UNDER ACTION 4

Action 4 – Modify the Gulf Cobia Possession Limit and/or Establish a Trip Limit

Gulf Council Preferred Alternative 2: Reduce the recreational and commercial daily possession limit to 1 fish per person, regardless of the number or duration of trips.

Gulf Council Preferred Option 2a: in the Gulf Zone

Gulf Council Preferred Alternative 3: Create a recreational and commercial daily trip limit. Fishermen may not exceed the per person daily possession limit.

Gulf Council Preferred Option 3a: in the Gulf Zone

Gulf Council Preferred Sub-option i: The trip limit for cobia is two fish.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION 11: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2, UNDER ACTION 5, AS THE SOUTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL'S PREFERRED

Action 5 – Modify the Gulf Cobia Minimum Size Limit

Alternative 2: Retain the current recreational and commercial minimum size limit of 36 inches FL in the Gulf Zone and increase the recreational and commercial minimum size limit to 36 inches FL in the FLEC Zone.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

The following direction to staff was provided:

DIRECTION TO STAFF TO DEVELOP AN ALTERNATIVE TO ADDRESS FLEC ZONE SECTOR ALLOCATIONS (UPDATES CURRENT % BASED ON FES, OTHER TIME PERIODS, IPT TO DISCUSS)

Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Structure White Paper

During its September 2020 meeting the Council reviewed appointments to the Mackerel Cobia AP and decided to further discuss the structure of the advisory panel. In December, the Council directed staff to put together a white paper detailing how the Advisory Panel structure can be modified to better work with different regions and management organizations, such as other regional councils and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Staff presented a white paper with options to work with the Mid-Atlantic, Gulf, and New England Councils and the ASMFC.

- Do not support adding a member from the New England region because we do not manage CMP species in that region.
- Concern about adding a Gulf representative because the fisheries are so diverse that it would be hard to find one person to represent the entire CMP fishery.
 - Ensure that Gulf Council and South Atlantic Council APs have had a chance to discuss an issue in advance of either chair going to the other Council's AP meeting.
 - Joint AP meetings could be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- There is currently no need to add an additional representative for the Mid-Atlantic region, working with ASMFC should help.
- Support for **Option 3**: Joint-MC AP and ASMFC Spanish Mackerel AP meetings could be held to discuss Spanish mackerel issues as needed. Members of the MC AP that do not participate in the Spanish mackerel fishery would not be required to attend.
 - The Gulf Council could send representatives to these meetings as well.
 - Working with ASMFC would help improve representation throughout the Mid-Atlantic region and possibly the New England states (ASMFC is still working on populating APs under their new board structure).
 - Should be flexible enough to adjust to changing fisheries.

Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Agenda Items

The next Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel will be held on April 6, 2021 via webinar. To optimize the level of input the Council desires from its advisory panels, the Committee was asked to provide guidance on items to include on the next Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel agenda. The Committee has asked the AP to discuss:

- CMP Amendment 34 (Atlantic king mackerel)
- CMP Amendment 32 (Gulf cobia)
- Updated FPRs
- Impacts of COVID on mackerel fisheries
- Feedback on discussion at Council meeting regarding AP structure

Other Business

The commercial trip limit system for Atlantic Spanish mackerel in the Southern Zone (NC/SC line south to the Miami-Dade/Monroe line in Florida) uses an adjusted quota system with several step downs (3,500-pounds at the beginning of the season, dropping to 1,500-pounds when 75% of the adjusted quota has been met, 500-pounds when 100% of the adjusted quota has been met, closure once the full quota has been met). Rick DeVictor, SERO, explained to the Committee that due to late reporting and associated issues with projections from the Science Center there was a need to close the fishery to commercial harvest immediately, skipping usual the trip limit step downs. The Committee noted the intent to take a comprehensive look at the Spanish mackerel fishery once results from the upcoming stock assessment for Spanish mackerel are available and that this issue could be addressed at that time.

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 12: ADOPT THE FOLLOWING TIMING AND TASKS:

1. Continue work on CMP Amendment 34 and prepare a draft for discussion and selection of preferred alternatives at the June 2021 meeting.
2. Work with Gulf Council staff to present information on CMP Amendment 32 to the Gulf Council and Gulf Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel.
3. Work with Gulf Council staff to continue development CMP Amendment 32 for additional review at the June 2021 meeting.
4. White Paper Action – work with ASMFC staff on ad hoc AP structure.
5. Convene a meeting of the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel to discuss topics listed above.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL