

**FINAL**  
**SUMMARY REPORT**  
**MACKEREL COBIA COMMITTEE**  
**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**Webinar**  
**June 17, 2021**

The Committee approved minutes from the March 2021 meeting and the agenda.

**Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Report**

AP Chair, Ira Laks, provided a summary of Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel discussion and recommendations on Coastal Migratory Pelagics Amendments 32 and 34, as well as other items relevant to the Coastal Migratory Pelagics fishery.

**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. Council staff reviewed a decision document for CMP Amendment 34 with analyses and updated action/alternative language based on guidance provided by the Council at their March 2021 meeting.

The Committee provided the following comments on the actions and alternatives:

- Management of Atlantic king mackerel has been successful and maintaining the historical makeup of the fishery may be beneficial (rationale for adding new alternative under Action 2 (sector allocations)).
- At the September 2021 meeting, Council state representatives will provide information on how Action 6 (damaged fish) may conflict with state regulations and their state regulatory process for modifying regulations.
- Approval for public hearings will be considered at the September 2021 Council meeting.

The Committee provided the following direction to staff:

- Include the current CMP FMP goals and objectives for the Council to consider when reviewing modifications to sector allocations.
- Provide detail on ACT alternatives based on the Council's selected preferred alternatives under Action 1 (ACL) and Action 2 (sector allocations).
- Divide Action 5 (minimum size limit) into two separate actions, one for each sector, preferred alternative for the recreational sector per motions below.
- Provide information on the rationale for setting the Atlantic king mackerel minimum size limit at 24-inches fork length.
  - *From the proposed rule that raised the minimum size limit for king mackerel from 20-inches FL to 24-inches FL (64 FR 29622): "Besides reducing harvest of immature fish, the increased minimum size limit would decrease recreational harvest and prevent overrun of the recreational allocation and TAC."*

The following motions were approved:

**MOTION 1:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 1 IN CMP AMENDMENT 34.

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

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 1 (NO ACTION) AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 2 IN CMP AMENDMENT 34.

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain the current allocations of 62.9% to the recreational sector and 37.1% to the commercial sector, apply those allocations to the revised total annual catch limit for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel. The allocations are based on landings from 1979-1983.

**MOTION FAILS (6 OPPOSED, 5 IN FAVOR, 5 ABSTENTIONS)**

**MOTION:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 4 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 2 IN CMP AMENDMENT 34.

**Alternative 4.** Allocate 68.9% of the revised total annual catch limit for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel to the recreational sector. Allocate 31.1% of the revised total annual catch limit for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel to the commercial sector. The allocations are calculated based on MRIP-FES average landings for Atlantic king mackerel for the years 2014 – 2019.

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION:** ADD AN ALTERNATIVE TO ACTION 2 THAT WOULD ALLOCATE 62.9% TO THE RECREATIONAL SECTOR AND 37.1% TO THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR.

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION BECOMES MAIN MOTION**

**MOTION 2:** ADD AN ALTERNATIVE TO ACTION 2 THAT WOULD ALLOCATE 62.9% TO THE RECREATIONAL SECTOR AND 37.1% TO THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION BECOMES MAIN MOTION

MAIN MOTION APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION 3:** SELECT THE NEW ALTERNATIVE (ALLOCATE 62.9% TO THE RECREATIONAL SECTOR AND 37.1% TO THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR) AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

MOTION APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION 4:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 4 IN CMP AMENDMENT 34.

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

**MOTION APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION:** SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 5 IN CMP AMENDMENT 34.

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

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION:** ADD AN ALTERNATIVE FOR ONLY REDUCING RECREATIONAL HARVEST TO 22-IN FL AND SELECT AS PREFERRED.

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION BECOMES MAIN MOTION**

**MOTION 5:** ADD AN ALTERNATIVE FOR ONLY REDUCING RECREATIONAL HARVEST TO 22-IN FL AND SELECT AS PREFERRED.

**MAIN MOTION APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**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 indicate 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 assessment and provided recommendations for new ABCs for Gulf cobia. The Gulf Council reviewed this amendment at their April meeting, modified their preferred alternatives. Council staff reviewed a decision document and draft document for CMP Amendment 32 with analyses and updated action/alternative language as well as modifications made by the Gulf Council at their April 2021 meeting.

The Committee provided the following comments on the actions and alternatives:

- In future decision documents specify all preferred alternatives as approved by the South Atlantic Council, Gulf Council, or both Councils.
- Maintain the Council's current preferred alternatives under Action 5.1 because the goal of Amendment 32 is to reduce harvest to prevent overfishing and the Council would like to maintain consistency in regulations between federal and state waters and between the Gulf Zone and FLEC zone.
- Maintain the Council's current preferred alternative under Action 6 (minimum size limit) because it provides a needed reduction in landings to keep harvest below the ACL. It will be important to educate the public on netting large cobia as opposed to utilizing a gaff.

The Committee provided the following direction to staff:

- Provide history on joint-Council decisions related to seasons and seasonal closures.

The following motions were approved:

**MOTION 6:** IN ACTION 2, TO MOVE ALTERNATIVE 4 TO CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED.

**Alternative 4:** Modify the Gulf Group Cobia stock ACL apportionment at 62% to the Gulf Zone and 38% to the FLEC Zone, based on the MRIP-FES average landings for Gulf Group Cobia for the years 2001 – 2015, and use this apportionment to update the Zone ACLs based on the Gulf Group Cobia ACL(s) in Action 1.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION 7: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS PREFERRED UNDER ACTION 4**

**Alternative 2:** Use the Gulf Council’s ACL/ACT Control Rule to calculate ACTs for the Gulf Zone and the recreational sector in the FLEC Zone.

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION 8: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 UNDER ACTION 7 AS PREFERRED**

**Alternative 2:** Modify the Framework Procedure to update the responsibilities of each Council for setting regulations for the Gulf Group Cobia. The responsibilities of each Council would be modified as follows:

1. Recommendations with respect to the Atlantic migratory groups of king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, ~~and cobia~~ will be the responsibility of the South Atlantic Council, and those for the Gulf migratory groups of king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia will be the responsibility of the Gulf Council, with the following exceptions:
  - a. The South Atlantic Council will have the responsibility to:
    - set vessel trip limits;
    - closed seasons or areas;
    - gear restrictions;
    - per person bag and possession limits;
    - size limits;
    - in-season and post-season accountability measures;
    - specification of ACTs or sector ACTs

for the east coast of Florida including the Atlantic side of the Florida Keys for Gulf migratory group Cobia (i.e., Florida East Coast Zone).

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE (ONE OPPOSED)

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**MOTION 9: SELECT ALTERNATIVE 3 UNDER ACTION 3 AS PREFERRED**

**Alternative 3:** Retain the FLEC Zone cobia ACL allocation of 8% to the commercial sector and 92% to the recreational sector and update the ACL(s) selected in Action 2 based on MRIP-FES landings.

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL (1 ABSTENTION)**

**Other Business**

None

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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 10: ADOPT THE FOLLOWING TIMING AND TASKS:**

1. Continue work on CMP Amendment 34 and prepare a draft for discussion and approval for public hearings at the September 2021 meeting.
2. Continue work with Gulf Council staff on CMP Amendment 32 and prepare a draft for discussion and approval for public hearings at the September 2021 meeting.

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**