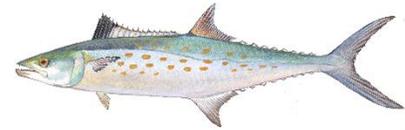


Spanish Mackerel Summary

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
March 2019



Issue:

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (AP) has expressed concern about increased participation in the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery and how this increase may affect Spanish mackerel in the long term. Of particular concern to stakeholders are recent closures to commercial Spanish mackerel harvest in federal waters off the northern zone (New York/Connecticut/Rhode Island line to the North Carolina/South Carolina line). During the 2017/2018 season, 100,000 pounds of quota was transferred from the southern zone (NC/SC line to the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line, Florida) to the northern zone to prevent an early closure. However, the northern zone quota was still projected to be met and federal waters were closed to commercial harvest of Spanish mackerel on November 7, 2018. The southern zone did not close, but harvested 96.6% its remaining quota (SERO ALS, preliminary estimate). During the 2018/2019 season there was no transfer of quota between the two zones. The northern zone was closed to commercial harvest on November 4, 2018 and the southern zone was closed to commercial harvest on February 5, 2019.

Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Motions:

From the April 2018 Advisory Panel Meeting:

MOTION: REQUEST THE COUNCIL CONSIDER A LIMITED ENTRY SYSTEM FOR ATLANTIC SPANISH MACKEREL.

APPROVED BY AP (11 IN FAVOR-0 OPPOSED-3 ABSTENTIONS).

Points raised during this discussion include:

- The commercial Spanish mackerel fishery is growing, and the commercial ACL has come close to being caught. Participation in the fishery is going to continue to increase and limited entry would address issues before they became a serious problem.
- A limited entry system would give the Council an easier way to regulate the commercial sector and would professionalize the fleet.
- When there are a limited number of fish available, there should be a limited number of fishermen. It is always useful to define the universe of participants.
- Many other South Atlantic Council commercial permits are limited access, including king mackerel.
- An AP member noted that the Gulf is not experiencing the same issues with Spanish mackerel as the South Atlantic. It was suggested that, since the commercial Spanish mackerel permit covers the Gulf, South Atlantic, and Mid-Atlantic that a separate permit or endorsement could be required for harvest in the South Atlantic region.

Current Regulations:

Regulation	Commercial	Recreational
Zones	Northern Zone (NY/CT/RI state line to the NC/SC state line) Southern Zone (NC/SC state line to the Miami-Dade/Monroe County Line, Florida)	None
Allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total Commercial: 55% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Northern Zone: 20% ○ Southern Zone: 80% 	45%
Annual Catch Limit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total Commercial: 3,300,000 pounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Northern Zone: 662,670 pounds ○ Southern Zone: 2,667,330 pounds 	2,727,000 pounds
Season	March 1 st to the end of February	March 1 st to the end of February
Trip/Bag Limit	Northern Zone	15-fish per person
	3,500 pounds year-round	
	Southern Zone	
	Adjusted Quota = 2,417,330 pounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting March 1st until 75% of the adjusted quota is reached: 3,500 pounds • From 75% until 100% of the adjusted quota is reached: 1,500 pounds • From 100% adjusted quota until 100% of the full quota is reached: 500 pounds 	
Minimum Size Limit	12-inches FL	12-inches FL