

Public Hearing Summary

CMP Amendment 34: Atlantic King Mackerel Catch Levels and Atlantic King and Spanish Mackerel Management Measures

Webinar¹

November 15, 2021

Council/Staff

Spud Woodward
Trish Murphey
Christina Wiegand
Cameron Rhodes
Kim Iverson
Chip Collier
Myra Brouwer

6 members of the public attended.
4 members of the public commented.

Ira Laks: For-Hire/Commercial, Jupiter, Florida

Ira would like to see the commercial minimum size limit remain at 24-inches fork length (FL). A 22-in minimum size limit will hurt the viability of market price. Smaller fish are harder to sell, and they drag down the overall price. He has not heard any support for a lower size limit from the industry and the commercial Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (MCAP) members were adamant about not reducing the commercial minimum size. The MCAP recommended to split the minimum size limit apart by section so that it would give the Council the opportunity, if they wanted to go down that road, to see how a lower size limit would work for the recreational sector.

Ira would also like to see the provision allowing commercial fishermen to possess 5% undersized king mackerel, by weight, to remain in place. It takes a lot of effort to restrain a king mackerel if you're trying to measure it and you often end up killing the fish. Most professional fishermen can simply look at a fish and know if it meets the regulation, but it's important to keep the 5% percent undersized allowance.

Rusty Hudson: Commercial, Daytona Beach, Florida

Rusty would like the provision allowing commercial fishermen to possess 5% undersized king mackerel, by weight, to remain in place. The buffer keeps one undersized fish from causing a fisherman a legal problem. King mackerel are resilient at living under certain kind of stressful conditions.

Rusty would also like the commercial minimum size limit to remain at 24-in FL. If 22-inches is where 50% of females are mature, a minimum size of 24-in is a good buffer and anything lower than 22-inches should not be considered.

¹ Full webinar recording or transcript available upon request.

Mackerel Cobia Committee
A3b: CMP Amendment 34 Public Hearing Summary

Rusty supports raising the bag limit for recreational fishing in federal waters off Florida to 3-fish per person to make them consistent with the rest of the recreational sector. He supports the 5% buffer between the ABC and ACL, as recommended by the MC AP. He would also like the recreational sector to be accountable for what they are extracting. Overall, Rusty does not want to see drastic changes made to the king mackerel fishery because it has been a success.

Anthony Lautieri: Commercial, Jupiter, Florida

Anthony like to see the commercial minimum size limit remain at 24-inches FL. He has spoken with fishermen, dealers, and brokers and nobody believes lowing the minimum size limit would be beneficial. It is harder to see sell smaller fish and that will have an economic impact on the fishery. It is also important to make sure fish are not taken before they have had a chance to spawn.

Anthony would also like the provision allowing commercial fishermen to possess 5% undersized king mackerel, by weight, to remain in place. Fishermen don't target the smaller fish and try to release them to live, but don't want to get in trouble for the occasional smaller fish.

Barrett Colby: Commercial

Barrett would like to see the commercial minimum size limit remain at 24-inches FL because 22-in FL is too small. When fishermen are catching king mackerel and begin to see too many below the minimum size limit they move to a different spot. If the minimum size limit is lowered, fishermen will stay and catch the smaller fish. It is important to not harvest those fish because you want to have a large nursey and not harm or lose an entire class of fish.

Barrett would like the recreational bag limit in federal waters off of Florida to remain at 2-fish per person. They are not currently catching the 2-fish per person, but if something changes and they begin to catch more fish the quota could be met which would hurt the charter fishermen. Raising the bag limit puts pressure on them to catch more fish, especially if clients become competitive.

Barrett would like the provision allowing commercial fishermen to possess 5% undersized king mackerel, by weight, to remain in place and supports the recreational sector being able to keep cut-off damaged/fish. However, the regulation needs to be clear on whether the damaged part must be 24-inches FL or the damaged part can be cut off.

Webinar¹

November 16, 2021

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Spud Woodward
Christina Wiegand
Cameron Rhodes

3 members of the public attended.

2 members of the public commented.

Jimmy Hull, Ormond Beach, Florida

Jimmy would like to see the commercial minimum size limit remain at 24-inches FL and the provision allowing commercial fishermen to possess 5% undersized king mackerel, by weight, retained. He was comfortable with the increased bag limit for the recreational sector, but he didn't want to speak for the private recreational sector. He noted that the charter fishermen he'd spoken with were fine with the increase to 3-fish per person, it would just mean they need to catch more for clients. Jimmy agrees that there is a shark depredation problem and recreational fishermen could be able to retain fish damaged by sharks.

Robert Pelosi

Robert is a former chair of the MCAP and provided some history on the 2-fish per person bag limit for the recreational sector in federal waters off Florida. At the time, there was a fear that fishermen in Florida would make multiple trips a day because they had easier (closer) access to the fish than other areas. However, that didn't end up happening. The only recreational fishermen making multiple trips were charter/headboats with different clients on each trip. He felt comfortable raising the bag limit to 3-fish per person.

Robert would also like to see the commercial minimum size limit remain at 24-inches FL. Smaller king mackerel are only caught when they are mixed in with Spanish mackerel. Inexperienced fishermen cannot tell the difference between an 18-in king mackerel and an 18-Spanish mackerel but lowering the minimum size does not solve that problem. The market wants larger king mackerel and smaller king mackerel affect that market for Spanish mackerel.

Robert supports allowing recreational fishermen to keep cut-off/damaged fish, but he felt that damaged fish should not have to meet the minimum size limit requirements.

Summary of Written Comment Received

Full text comments can be found here:

<https://safmc.wufoo.com/reports/cmp-amendment-34-public-comment-report/>

51 Comments Received

- **Support for Action 1, Preferred Alternative 3:** ACL = 95% ABC
- **Support for Action 2, Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action):** Retain the current sector allocation percentages.
- **Support for Action 3, Preferred Alternative 2:** Revise the ACT to reflect the updated ACL/ABC.
- **Support for Action 4, Alternative 1 (No Action):** Maintain the 2-fish per person recreational bag limit in federal waters off the east coast of Florida.
 - King mackerel are not as desirable as other Florida species, recreational fishermen don't need to increase their bag limit, and the extra poundage should be allocated to the commercial sector.
 - There is an unknown amount of recreational fishing occurring between Miami Dade and Monroe County.
- **Support for Action 4, Alternative 2:** Increase the recreational bag limit in federal waters off the east coast of Florida to 3-fish per person.

Mackerel Cobia Committee
A3b: CMP Amendment 34 Public Hearing Summary

- Private recreational anglers are not making multiple trips a day to circumvent the 2-fish per person bag limit and should be allowed 3-fish per person.
- Increasing the bag limit will create consistency with the rest of the king mackerel management area.
- **Support for Action 5 and 6, Gulf Council Preferred Alternative 1 (No Action):**
Maintain the 24-in FL minimum size limit for the recreational and commercial sector, respectively.
 - Fish smaller than 24-inches FL yield little meat.
 - Smaller fish in the market will hurt prices and the overall market for king mackerel.
 - Harvesting smaller king mackerel has the chance to harm juvenile fish who have not spawned and ultimately the stock as a whole. There is a need to ensure that king mackerel retain a good stock status.
- **Support for Action 7, Alternative 2:** allow recreational fishermen to retain cut/damaged king and Spanish mackerel that meet minimum size limits.
 - Ensure these fish count towards the daily bag limit.
- *Other management measures:*
 - Prohibit gillnetting in the Gulf of Mexico.
 - Establish a 75% income requirement plus five years of commercial fishing to access king mackerel permits, to prevent recreational fishermen with a lot of money from accessing permits needed by commercial fishermen.
 - Decrease the recreational bag limit to 1-fish per person or six per vessel, whichever is more restrictive.
 - Decrease the winter commercial trip limit back to 50-fish.
 - The new 100-fish trip limit is causing a drop in the market price.
- *Other concerns:*
 - Recreational fish are being sold illegally.