

**Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Structure White Paper**  
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
March 2021

At their September 2020 meeting, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) reviewed appointments to the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (MC AP) and discussed the need to ensure the MC AP is representative of the entire Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP) fishery, including a representative for the cobia fishery off the east coast of Florida. The Council further discussed the structure of the MC AP during their December 2020 meeting and requested staff bring back a paper discussing different options for restructuring MC AP.

**The CMP FMP and Current Membership:**

- The CMP fisheries are jointly managed with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. Additionally, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) manages Spanish mackerel in state water along the Atlantic coast. Management of the king mackerel and Spanish mackerel fisheries through the CMP FMP extends through the Mid-Atlantic region.
  - Management of king and Spanish mackerel is broken up into two zones with quotas being allocated to each.
    - Northern Zone: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina.
    - Southern Zone: South Carolina, Georgia, east Florida to the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line.
  - The Council manages Gulf cobia along the east coast of Florida.
- Currently, there are no state or sector specific seats currently on the AP except for a designated non-governmental organization (NGO) seat.

**Table 1.** Summary of Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel members by state and sector.

State*	Charter	Recreational	Commercial	NGO	Research	Total
North Carolina	2	1	2	1	1	7
South Carolina	1	1	0	0	0	2
Georgia	1	0	0	0	0	1
Florida	1	2	4	0	0	7
<b>Total</b>	5	4	6	1	1	17

\*Not included, the MAFMC Appointee from Virginia Beach, Virginia.

**Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Discussion at the November 2020 Meeting:**

- For-hire fishermen in the Mid-Atlantic region are required to have a CMP for-hire permit if targeting any CMP species. As landings continue to increase farther north, it will be important to make sure that individuals from that region are able to provide information on what the fishery is like in their area.
  - Now that there are fishermen actively targeting Spanish mackerel in the New England region, it may be helpful to have participation from fishermen in that area as well.

- The Mid-Atlantic Council has two representatives that serve on the Council's Mackerel Cobia Committee. The MC AP should have the same representation.

### **Options to Expand Membership of the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel:**

#### *Add a new seat for a Gulf of Mexico Representative*

- At past MC AP meetings members have indicated that when discussing issues that would require approval from the Gulf Council or issues that influence both fisheries, input from Gulf fishermen would be beneficial. Additionally, the markets for king and Spanish mackerel in both regions interact with each other and understanding both areas is key to implementing effective regulations.
- **Option 1:** The South Atlantic Council could request the Gulf Council appoint an individual to serve on the MC AP.
- **Option 2:** A member of the Gulf Council's Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (such as the chair), could be invited to participate in MC AP when joint South Atlantic Council and Gulf Council issues are discussed (for example, CMP Amendment 32- Gulf cobia)

#### *Add an additional seat for a Mid-Atlantic Representative*

- Landings in the Mid-Atlantic Region have increased in recent years. The Mid-Atlantic Council currently appoints one individual to the MC AP. An additional representative may allow input from multiple sectors and areas along the mid-Atlantic coast.
- **Option:** The South Atlantic Council could request the Mid-Atlantic Council appoint an additional individual to better represent the fishery.

#### *Add a seat for a New England Representative*

- Anecdotal evidence indicates that landings of king and Spanish mackerel are increasing in the New England region as well. However, the South Atlantic Council does not currently manage CMP species in this region.
- **Option 1:** The South Atlantic Council could request the New England Council appoint an individual to better represent the fishery.
- **Option 2:** A member of a relevant Advisory Panel, as chosen by the New England Council could be invited to participate in MC AP discussions when topics related to climate change and movement of mackerel species in the New England region are discussed in the future.

### **Options to Increase Coordination with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission:**

- The Council may consider working with the ASMFC to address management issues related to Atlantic Spanish mackerel. Atlantic king mackerel and Gulf cobia are not managed by ASMFC.

- **Option 1:** The Council could develop a joint-AP with the ASMFC for Spanish mackerel. The MC AP could be modified to only address king mackerel and Gulf cobia management issues.
  - If the Council wants to go down this road, including other jointly managed species, such as Black Sea Bass, could be considered as well.
  - This option would need further discussion and development.
- **Option 2:** The Council could work with ASMFC to identify Atlantic Spanish mackerel liaisons to create a Spanish mackerel sub-panel. Sub-panel members would be made up of representatives from the MC AP and ASMFC. Sub-panel members would attend both South Atlantic and ASMFC meetings when Spanish mackerel management issues are discussed.
- **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.

**A note on funding:** Councils who have appointees to the MC AP could be asked to fund their travel as is done with the Dolphin Wahoo AP. It should also be noted that the MC AP used to include a five-member Cobia Sub-Panel that was disbanded when the Council transferred management of Atlantic cobia to the ASMFC through CMP Amendment 31.