

Port Meetings for the Commercial and Recreational King and Spanish Mackerel Fisheries



Discussion Document

Background:

During their April 2019 meeting and their October 2022 meeting, the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (AP) passed motions requesting the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) set up a series of port meetings to gather more information on the Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel fisheries. In the past, the South Atlantic Council acknowledged the importance of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the commercial and recreational king and Spanish mackerel fisheries and how port meetings may provide an effective avenue to achieve that understanding. During their December 2022 meeting, the South Atlantic Council directed staff to begin developing a plan for conducting port meetings throughout the South Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic and New England regions.

Decisions Made in March 2023:

Focus: Gulf and Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.

- Other species (specifically Gulf cobia and little tunny) are likely to come up during discussions and staff should be prepared with information and a plan to facilitate those discussion in a way that would still provide the Council important information on those species but would not overshadow needed discussions on king and Spanish mackerel.

Attendees: Port meetings will be open to all members of the public (commercial, for-hire, recreational, and others) interested in discussing the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.

Where: As possible, port meetings should be conducted in key communities throughout the Gulf of Mexico and along the Atlantic up to the southern end of Massachusetts. As such, working with the Gulf of Mexico, Mid-Atlantic, and New England Fishery Management Councils, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and state agencies will be integral to the success of port meetings.

The Committee feels the following information will be key in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries:

- How species movement/expansion may affect future management, especially how fishermen are responding to these changes and how the permit structure may influence their behavior.
- Dynamics of the commercial fleet, including the mobility of the fleet, market flexibility, and spatial seasonality.
 - Differences in how commercial fishermen interact with the fishery (travel to different areas vs. only participate in one area).
 - Differences in the size of fish being targeted at different times and in different areas.
- How the commercial and recreational sectors utilize and value the king and Spanish mackerel fishery.
 - Is there a big catch and release component to the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.
- What role do king and Spanish mackerel fishing tournaments play in the fishery. How might these tournaments be affecting the fisheries.
 - Is there acceptance/interest within the recreational industry to move towards catch and release only tournaments.
- How water quality and harmful algal blooms affecting the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.
- How king and Spanish mackerel fisheries interact with other important fisheries.
- What gears are currently being used in the fishery and how has this changed over time.

Steps to take in June: The Committee should discuss the current objectives in the Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plan (CMP FMP) to develop key questions to ask stakeholders during port meetings.

Objectives for this Meeting:

- Discuss goals and objectives of port meetings.
- Review current CMP FMP goals and objectives, provide guidance to staff on questions to ask during port meetings.
- Review draft timeline and development plan.

CMP FMP Goals and Objectives:

Like all Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), the FMP for Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP) in the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Regions (CMP FMP) contains a series of objectives to guide management decisions. The objectives should balance the biological needs of the fish stocks with human need, reconcile both present and future costs and benefits, integrate both private and public interests, and provide for a comprehensive approach to addressing problems within the fishery.

As the needs of a fishery change over time, fishery management councils are encouraged to regularly reassess the FMP objectives (50 C.F.R. § 600.305(b)). Amendment 6 to the CMP FMP (1992) was the last amendment to modify the objectives of the CMP FMP. At recent meetings the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) and South Atlantic Council have been working to revise the objectives to better fit the fishery as it operates today.

<i>Objective 1</i>	The primary objective of this FMP is to achieve and maintain optimum yield, to allow recovery of overfished populations, and maintain population levels sufficient to ensure adequate recruitment.
<i>Objective 2</i>	To provide a flexible management system for the resource which minimizes regulatory delay while retaining substantial Council and public input in management decisions and which can rapidly adapt to changes in resource abundance, new scientific information, and changes in fishing patterns among user groups or by areas.
<i>Objective 3</i>	To achieve robust fishery reporting and data collection systems across all sectors for monitoring the coastal migratory pelagic fishery which minimizes scientific, management, and risk uncertainty.
<i>Objective 4</i>	To minimize gear and user group conflicts.
<i>Objective 5</i>	<i>To distribute the total allowable catch of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel between recreational and commercial user groups based on the catches that occurred during the early to mid-1970s, which is prior to the development of the deep-water run-around gillnet fishery and when the resource was not overfished.</i>
<i>Objective 6</i>	To minimize waste and bycatch in the fishery.
<i>Objective 7</i>	<i>To provide appropriate management to address specific migratory groups of king mackerel.</i>
<i>Objective 8</i>	To optimize the social and economic benefits of the coastal migratory pelagic fisheries.

Note: Objectives highlighted in blue have been approved by the South Atlantic and Gulf Councils but have not been formally adopted. Objectives highlighted in yellow have been recommended for removal by the Gulf Council.

COMMITTEE ACTION: REVIEW CURRENT CMP FMP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES AND DEVELOP KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK MACKEREL COBIA AP AND, SUBSEQUENTLY, STAKEHOLDERS DURING PORT MEETINGS.

Draft Goals and Objectives for Port Meetings:

- Evaluation of current goals and objectives of the CMP FMP.
 - Achieving the maximum economic and social yield from the fishery.
 - Maintaining the long-term sustainability of stocks.
 - Maintaining the integrity of fishing communities under climate change.
 - Achieving the most equitable management structure under climate change.

Note: proposed goals and objectives based on parameters provided Magnuson Stevens Act and key topics provided by the Council during their March 2023 meeting.

COMMITTEE ACTION: REVIEW DRAFT PORT MEETING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES AND PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO STAFF.

Draft timeline for completing port meetings:

Note: this timeline was designed with the management response to the Atlantic Spanish mackerel stock assessment in mind. The Committee should discuss whether or not that want to keep port meeting timing tied to development of management actions for Spanish mackerel.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	December 2022	Council directs staff to organize port meetings for Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	March 2023	Council reviews detailed plan for conducting port meetings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	April 2023	Mackerel Cobia AP meeting via webinar to review plan for conducting port meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 2023	Council reviews AP member input and approves plan for conducting port meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 2023	South Atlantic Council reviews SSC recommendations and directs staff to begin work on an amendment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	August 2023	Staff presents port meeting plans to Gulf Council and ASMFC.
<input type="checkbox"/>	September 2023	Council reviews port meeting input from Gulf Council and ASMFC reviewed, and guidance provided to staff.
<input type="checkbox"/>	December 2023	Port meetings plan and schedule finalized.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Winter 2024	Port meetings held throughout the Atlantic region.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spring 2024	Port meetings held throughout the Atlantic region.
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 2024	South Atlantic Council approves Spanish mackerel amendment for public hearings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Summer 2024	Port meetings held throughout the Atlantic region.
<input type="checkbox"/>	September 2024	Summary report prepared and presented to the Council.
<input type="checkbox"/>	September 2024	South Atlantic Council reviews public comments.
<input type="checkbox"/>	October 2024	Gulf Council reviews public comments.

<input type="checkbox"/>	December 2024	South Atlantic Council considers amendment for formal review.
<input type="checkbox"/>	January 2025	Gulf Council considers amendment for formal review.

Note: steps highlighted in yellow are related to port meetings, steps highlighted in blue are related to the development of an amendment in response to new Atlantic Spanish mackerel catch level recommendations.

COMMITTEE ACTION: REVIEW AND APPROVE DRAFT TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION OF PORT MEETINGS RELATIVE TO DEVELOPMENT OF A MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO UPDATED ATLANTIC SPANISH MACKEREL CATCH LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS.

Port Meetings Planning Team:

To facilitate the development of port meetings staff would like to create a planning team. This team would be responsible for the following:

- Discussions on how to best facilitate port meeting discussions.
- Identifying key locations for holding port meetings.
- Identifying key stakeholders and ways to encourage participation in port meetings.

Planning team members would be requested from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) staff, as well as state agencies, as recommended by the Councils. Staff at the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Council could be involved/consulted on an as needed basis.

COMMITTEE ACTION: REVIEW AND APPROVE PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A PORT MEETINGS PLANNING TEAM.

Next Steps:

- Present to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission at their respective August meetings.
- Discuss CMP FMP and port meeting goals and objectives with the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel.