

Mackerel Committee Report
October 22, 2018
Kevin Anson – Chair

CMP Landings Update

NMFS staff noted that the commercial king mackerel ACL was caught in the 2017-2018 fishing season and, excluding MRIP Wave 3 data, the recreational sector landed ~28.4% of its ACL. The 2017-2018 fishing season was the first with the three fish per person recreational bag limit for king mackerel. Landings for Spanish mackerel and cobia from the 2017 fishing season were below their respective stock ACLs.

CMP Framework Amendment 7

Staff reviewed the Council's purpose and need and preferred alternatives for CMP Framework Amendment 7. The CMP Advisory Panel (AP) reviewed the document via webinar on October 9, 2018 and agreed with the Council's current preferred alternative (Alternative 2) in Action 1 to increase the minimum size limit for Gulf cobia to 36 inches fork length (FL). The AP discussed at length the merits of the changes to the possession limit proposed in Action 2. The AP thought that establishing a daily vessel limit would unfairly affect for-hire operators, who may make more than one trip in a single day. If the possession limit is met on the first trip, then fishermen on the second trip would be unable to retain any cobia. As such, the AP agreed with the Council on reducing the per person daily possession limit to one fish, but recommended that the vessel limit be set to two fish per trip as opposed to per day.

The Committee discussed the AP's perspective on Action 2. Staff noted that the analysis cannot examine the exact number of for-hire vessels making two trips per day as opposed to one; therefore, the follow-up analysis assumed that all for-hire vessels made two trips per day, and landed the vessel trip limit for Gulf cobia. This resulted in less of a reduction in the recreational landings than using the daily vessel limit alone.

Without opposition, the Committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 2, to change the language in Alternative 3 and its options to reflect a vessel trip limit as opposed to a daily vessel limit.

Preferred Alternative 3: Create a recreational and commercial **daily vessel limit** for Gulf cobia. Anglers may not exceed the per person possession limit.

Preferred Option 3a: The recreational and commercial **daily vessel limit** for cobia is two fish.

Option 3b: The recreational and commercial **daily vessel limit** for cobia is four fish.

Option 3c: The recreational and commercial **daily vessel limit** for cobia is six fish.

BECOMES

Preferred Alternative 3: Create a recreational and commercial **vessel trip limit** for Gulf cobia. Anglers may not exceed the per person possession limit.

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Staff noted that there was no effect on the commercial sector with respect to whether the vessel limit was per trip or per day, since the average commercial trip landing cobia lasts ~four days. Further, the recreational sector lands greater than 90% of Gulf cobia annually, meaning that the majority of the effects of any changes in management would be observed most in the recreational landings. An analysis of the effect of a per trip vessel limit on recreational landings was requested, including a cumulative analysis of the combined effects of the increase in the minimum size limit and the decrease in the possession limit. For the analysis, it was assumed that every for-hire vessel makes two trips per day, since the data on the number of daily trips by each for-hire vessel is unknown. The analysis is shown below:

Table 1. Cumulative effects of the proposed regulations in CMP Framework Amendment 7. The effects of the proposed regulations for the recreational sector including the private and for-hire components, as shown in the top table. The effects on the commercial sector are shown in the bottom table.

Cumulative Effects: Recreational

Size Limit	Possession Limit	
	1/person; 2/vessel/day	1/person; 2/trip
33" FL	-9.2%	-4.1%
36" FL	-35.3%	-30.2%
39" FL	-56.2%	-51.1%
42" FL	-70.9%	-65.8%

Cumulative Effects: Commercial

Size Limit	Possession Limit	
	1/person; 2/vessel/day	1/person; 2/trip
33" FL	-5.0%	-6.0%
36" FL	-15.3%	-16.3%
39" FL	-34.0%	-35.0%
42" FL	-60.9%	-61.9%

The Committee heard a review of the public comments received on the document, and that an updated version of the codified text would be generated to reflect the change made in the motion. Staff added that, generally speaking, the reduction in fishing mortality resulting from an increase in the minimum size limit would decrease with time, while the same for a decrease in the possession limit would increase, assuming the amount of spawning stock biomass also increases with time. The Committee directed staff to make sure that research recommendations for the upcoming SEDAR update stock assessment reflected a need for increased sampling of cobia in the Gulf. Staff were also directed to notify the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council of any changes ultimately made to the management of Gulf cobia in the Gulf Zone.

Mr. Chair, this concludes by report.