

## Summary of the Mackerel Committee Pam Dana, Chair - January 28, 2015

### CMP Amendment Renumbering

Staff noted that the current list of CMP amendments had been renumbered and organized to move similar management changes along as efficiently as possible. CMP Amendment 24 (tabled until 2016) will address Atlantic Spanish Mackerel allocation shifts; CMP Amendment 26 will address Gulf and Atlantic King Mackerel ACLs, allocations, stock boundaries, and sale provisions; and CMP Amendment 28 will address splitting the commercial king and Spanish mackerel fishing permits.

### SEDAR 38 Stock Assessment, ACL Control Rule Buffers

SEFSC staff presented the Gulf migratory group king mackerel stock assessment (**Tab C, Nos. 4, 4a**). The assessment determined the fishery is not overfished or experiencing overfishing, with favorable reviews of the model. A substantial change in this assessment is the new winter mixing zone that has been reduced to the area south of the Florida Keys. This zone assumes 50/50 mixing between the Gulf and Atlantic migratory groups. Recruitment has been declining in recent years, and SEFSC staff recommended monitoring this trend in recruitment in the future. Overall, the stock is perceived to be healthy, and indicative of successful management strategy. The projected retained catch estimates increase in the first year of projections (2015), and decrease thereafter to equilibrium levels.

Council staff shared the results of running the SSC OFL and ABC recommendations through the Council's ACL/ACT Control Rule (**Tab C, No. 4b**), which indicated a necessity for a 9% buffer for the combined recreational and commercial fisheries between the ABC and the ACL. This should be addressed again at a later date, once the Council has a better idea of how it wants to proceed with redeveloping the commercial zone allocations in the Gulf.

### CMP Amendment 26 Scoping Document

Council staff reviewed the CMP 26 scoping document (**Tab C, No. 5**), which addresses Gulf and Atlantic King Mackerel ACLs, allocations, stock boundaries, and sale provisions. The ACLs can be increased in both migratory groups. The Councils are also interested in exploring sector reallocations within their own regions. The Gulf Council also must revisit the commercial zone allocations for the Gulf migratory group of king mackerel, since the SEDAR 38 stock assessment determined that the current Florida East Coast Subzone was actually part of the Atlantic migratory group. This requires redistributing the percentage of the Gulf commercial quota voided by the loss of the Florida East Coast Subzone amongst the remaining Gulf commercial zones. The Councils must also consider recognizing the new stock boundary and mixing zone from the SEDAR 38 stock assessment, which defines the new winter mixing zone as south of US

Highway 1 in Monroe County from the Dade/Monroe County line in the east to the Council jurisdictional boundary in the west from November 1 – March 31. Also, the South Atlantic Council is interested in allowing bag limit sales of king mackerel in the Atlantic shark gillnet fishery, to permit a historic practice in this particular fishery.

Lastly, committee members were interested in seeing sector-specific accountability measures developed for the king mackerel fishery.

**The Committee recommends, and I so move,** to recommend that CMP Amendment 26 go out to scoping.

*Motion carried.*

**The Committee recommends, and I so move,** to hold scoping meetings in the following locations:

Port Aransas, TX	Galveston, TX	Grand Isle, LA	Biloxi, MS
Mobile, AL	Panama City, FL	Tampa Bay, FL	Key West, FL

*Motion carried.*

### **CMP Amendment 28 Scoping Document**

Council staff reviewed the CMP 28 scoping document (**Tab C, No. 6**), which addresses splitting the Gulf and Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel commercial fishing permits. The South Atlantic Council is interested in splitting the federal commercial permits for these species to facilitate more region-specific management of the Atlantic migratory group of mackerels. The South Atlantic Council wants to explore a two-for-one permit reduction system similar to the same system in place for their snapper-grouper permits. Though the Gulf Council has not yet formally agreed to participate in CMP Amendment 28, the Council has heard and voiced concerns in the past over Gulf-specific permit issues, including how to address increasing effort in the Western and Northern Gulf zones from traveling fishermen. Multiple options could be considered for how to determine which fishermen qualify for which permits, and what qualification protocols would be necessary to achieve management goals.

**The Committee recommends, and I so move,** to move forward with scoping hearings on CMP Amendment 28 at the same meetings as CMP Amendment 26.

*Motion carried.*

## King Mackerel Gill Net Fishery Issues

Staff reviewed concerns presented by king mackerel gill net fishery permit holders (**Tab C, No. 7**), and a summary of a meeting with those stakeholders and Council members held January 12, 2015 in Key West, Florida (**Tab C, No. 7a**). The industry is asking the Council to consider raising the current trip limit from 25,000 lbs to 45,000 lbs. To accompany the increase in the trip limit, the industry has proposed accountability measures which would reduce the current and following year's quotas by the amount of each individual overage over the proposed trip limit. The industry goal is to reduce the probability of fishermen getting fined due to accidental overages.

Fishermen think that a 45,000 pound trip limit is highly unlikely to be met, making a trip limit overage that much less likely. Some fishermen suggested that a 35,000 pound trip limit would constitute a compromise between the current and requested trip limits. In reference to the Council's request whether smaller nets could be used to reduce the amount of fish potentially caught in a single set, the fishermen noted that the fish can sometimes get strung out over large areas, requiring the larger nets to encircle and catch the fish. Fishermen also requested that the Council consider removing latent permits that have no gillnet landings, revoking those gillnet endorsements.

Fishermen supported creating a system whereby a fisherman suspecting themselves of being over the trip limit could call a NMFS port agent prior to landing their catch. The port agent would meet the fisherman at the dock and, if the fisherman was in fact over the trip limit, he would not be fined, and the amount of catch over the trip limit would be excluded from his sale profits. Any profits from the sale of the landed fish over the trip limit would then be given to the proper authorities to go to the national treasury or donated to charity.

**The Committee recommends, and I so move,** to recommend that the Council create a framework action plan to evaluate alternative gillnet trip limits and accountability measures and elimination of latent permits to minimize the potential for enforcement action due to accidental trip limit overages.

**Motion carried.**

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my report.