

Spanish Mackerel (*Scomberomorus maculatus*)

Description:

Spanish mackerel are found off the U.S. Atlantic coast and within the Gulf, often in open water but also over deep grass beds, reefs, and closer to shore in estuaries. Although the population is considered two separate stocks: a Gulf stock and a South Atlantic stock, they are managed jointly as part of the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Fishery Management Plan. Spanish mackerel are covered with very small scales and have silver sides with a few rows of small yellow to orange spots. There are two closely spaced dorsal fins. Their lateral line has a gradual downward slope, compared to the king mackerel's, which drops sharply. They are not long-lived species, and they stay relatively small.



Gulf of Mexico Stock Characteristics: (SEDAR 81 2023; fishbase.org)

Natural mortality rate (M):	0.38/year (based on max age of 11 years)
50% are sexually mature:	~lowered from age-1 to age-0; 12.4 in (31.4 cm) FL
Maximum age:	~11 years
Maximum weight:	~ 13.0 lb (5.9 kg) whole weight
Maximum length:	~35.8 in (91 cm) FL

Life History and Distribution: (SEDAR 81 2023; Florida Museum Species Profile; NOAA Fisheries Species Directory)

Spanish mackerel migrate in large schools over great distances as water temperatures change. They are often schooling at the surface but can reside at depths from 33-115 ft (10-35 m). They can be found in the northern Gulf until September when they begin to migrate south along the coasts to warmer waters. They spawn in shallow coastal waters in the eastern Gulf; peak spawning occurs in May. They feed on

small fishes such as herring, menhaden, and anchovies and less often on shrimp, crabs, and squid. They are batch spawners, releasing eggs throughout the spawning season. While adults and larvae most often occur offshore, juveniles, which grow rapidly, can be found both offshore and near the coastline, using estuaries as nursery areas.

Current Gulf Council Regulations: Spanish mackerel has one stock ACL set at 11,300,000 lb landed weight. Recreational landings are monitored in MRIP-CHTS units. There are no sector allocations. Management measures include a recreational 12-inch FL minimum size limit and a 15 fish per person per day bag limit. The commercial sector does not have a trip limit. The fishing year begins April 1 of each year.

