

## Summary of the Mackerel Committee March 30, 2015

The Chair convened the Mackerel Committee to order and after handling committee business, introduced Martin Fisher, Chair of the Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP) Advisory Panel (AP) to summarize the AP discussions on Amendments 26 and 28, Framework Amendment 3 (Gillnet), as well as other issues from their March 2015 meeting (**Tab C, No. 4**).

### CMP AP Summary

Staff reviewed the overall health of the king mackerel fishery and then discussed the revised winter mixing zones between the Gulf and South Atlantic. Covering CMP Amendment 26, the AP endorsed an annual catch limit (ACL) for Gulf king mackerel equal to the acceptable biological catch (ABC), with the Committee having some objection to an annual review of projections by the Gulf SSC. The AP accepted the new winter mixing zone recognized in SEDAR 38, and expressed a preference that the Gulf Council manage king mackerel from the Dade/Monroe county line to the Texas/Mexico border. The AP proffered Gulf commercial zone quotas of 40% for the Western Zone, 18% for the Northern Zone, and 21% each for the Southern Zone handline and gillnet components. Reallocation of king mackerel from the recreational to the commercial sector was not favored; instead, an increased recreational bag limit of three fish per person per day was supported. The AP recommended allowing South Atlantic small coastal shark gillnetters to sell bag limits of king mackerel caught in drift gillnets, but agreed the issue would be best addressed by the South Atlantic Council.

Moving next into CMP Amendment 28, the AP favored splitting the federal commercial king mackerel permit in the Gulf, and developed a motion defining which vessels would receive either a fully- or non-transferable Gulf permit if such a split did occur. Division of the federal commercial Spanish mackerel fishing permit was also supported.

On CMP Framework Amendment 3, the AP recommended an increase in the daily trip limit for commercial king mackerel gillnet fishermen from 25,000 lbs to 35,000 lbs. A 5% buffer was recommended for the commercial king mackerel gillnet component between the annual catch target (ACT) and ACL, with any annual underage below the ACT added to the following year's ACT up to an amount equal to the ACL. A modification to the seafood dealer reporting process was endorsed to allow faster reporting between gillnet fishermen and fishery managers. The elimination of latent gillnet endorsements was not supported.

Lastly, while a quorum was still present, the AP recommended decreasing the recreational bag limit of cobia in federal waters to one fish per person per day. After a quorum was lost, the remaining AP members recommended exploring an individual fishing quota (IFQ) system for the handline component for the commercial king mackerel sector.

Input from the Mackerel Committee and the CMP AP with respect to Amendments 26 and 28 will be shared with the public during scoping.

### **CMP Framework Amendment 3**

Staff began presenting the options paper for CMP Framework Amendment 3 (**Tab C, No. 5a**) which addresses the commercial king mackerel gillnet fishery, and expressed the need for the Committee to select preferred alternatives before the Options Paper could go forward. However, with the allotted time for the Mackerel Committee meeting running short, the Committee deferred the selection of preferred alternatives to be addressed at and by Full Council.

The Committee Chair then recognized the presence of two commercial king mackerel gillnet fishermen, George Niles and Daniel Padron, and invited them to approach the podium to make any clarifying remarks on the fishery and field Committee questions. The gillnetters discussed elements of their fishery including the turnaround time differences for different trip limits (i.e., 24 hours for 25,000 to 35,000 lbs versus 48 hours for 45,000 lbs), as well as the manner in which they self-police their fishing effort to prevent quota overruns. It was acknowledged that many of the desires of the gillnetters were also those supported by the CMP AP, with the exception of a payback provision for any ACL overages and an increase in the trip limit to 45,000 lbs. The gillnetters also expressed their desire to fish on weekends, which would give them greater flexibility on when to fish.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my report.