

**Mackerel Committee Report
October 5, 2015
Pam Dana-Chair**

CMP Amendment 26

Staff reviewed CMP Amendment 26 (**Tab C, Nos. 4, 4a, 4b**), which addresses Gulf and South Atlantic migratory groups of king mackerel.

Action 1

Staff reviewed proposed changes to the stock boundary between the Gulf and Atlantic migratory groups of king mackerel. The SEDAR 38 stock assessment defined a much smaller winter mixing zone than that which is currently described. The new mixing zone occurs south of the Florida Keys from November 1 through March 31, with the difference in the alternatives being which Council would be responsible for managing that area year round.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 1, “Adjust the Management Boundary for Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) and Atlantic Migratory Groups of King Mackerel”, to make Alternative 3 the preferred alternative.

Alternative 3: Establish a single year-round boundary for separating the Gulf and Atlantic migratory groups of king mackerel at the Miami-Dade/Monroe county line (Figure 2.1.3). The Gulf Council would be responsible for management measures in the mixing zone.

Motion carried.

Actions 2 and 3

Actions 2 and 3 are primarily South Atlantic-centric actions focusing on defining harvest levels and provisions for selling bycatch for Atlantic king mackerel, respectively. The Committee reviewed these actions, and decided to wait to recommend preferred alternatives to the Council until after the amendment goes out to the CMP Advisory Panel (CMP AP).

Actions 4 and 5

Actions 4 and 5 are also primarily South Atlantic-centric actions, and were created from what was previously a three-part Action 4. The South Atlantic Council decided to divide the old Action 4 into what is now Actions 4 and 5 in order to better address the desired management issues therein. Analyses in the Amendment were conducted using the new actions.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, in Actions 4 and 5 of CMP 26, to accept the South Atlantic Council's modified language.

Motion carried.

Action 4 addresses the commercial season in the Atlantic Southern Zone, proposing a two season fishing year with the ACL apportioned between the two seasons. Action 5 has two parts: Action 5-1 proposes the creation of a Florida East Coast management zone (FLEC) within the Atlantic Southern Zone; and Action 5-2 proposes trip limits for the proposed FLEC. The South Atlantic Council representative identified an error in the language in Alternatives 3 and 4 of Action 4, indicating that the end of "season 1" in those alternatives should be October 31st, not October 1st.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, to amend Alternatives 3 and 4 in Action 4 of CMP Amendment 26 such that the end of season 1 is October 31 instead of October 1.

Motion carried.

Action 6

The Gulf Council is considering revising the ACL for Gulf king mackerel, based on the results of the assessment. The assessment recommends an ABC which is lower than the current ABC; however, this new ABC does not include the current Florida East Coast subzone (FLEC), which is actually part of the Atlantic migratory group. Also, with the exclusion of the FLEC comes the exclusion of a considerable amount of fishing effort. Staff have previously described this scenario as follows:

"The current relationship between effort and the ABC is similar to eight people sharing a pie with eight slices. Under the new recommended ABC from the stock assessment, the relationship changes such that it is more similar to five people sharing a pie with six slices. Each person will get more pie under the new ABC, since so much effort has shifted from the Gulf to the Atlantic."

Alternative 2 in Action 6 would set the ACL equal to the ABC. Committee members were concerned that this alternative had a declining ACL. Staff clarified that a surplus of fish existed in the population as a result of historical under-harvesting, and that this alternative allowed the harvest of that surplus. Additionally, a constant-catch scenario cannot be determined without a known allocation, which the Council is considering changing in Action 8 of this amendment. Committee members thought that it would be more appropriate, either way, to give fishermen the opportunity to harvest as much king mackerel as allowed by the stock assessment.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 6, "Modify the ACL for Gulf Migratory Group King Mackerel", to make Alternative 2 the Preferred Alternative.

Alternative 2: Set the Gulf migratory group king mackerel ACL equal to the ABC recommended by the Gulf Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) for 2015-2019. ABC values are in millions of pounds, whole weight:

Year	ABC (mp ww)
2015	9.62
2016	9.21
2017	8.88
2018	8.71
2019	8.55

Motion carried.

Action 7

Staff described commercial zone reallocation options, which the Council is considering since the FLEC is no longer part of the Gulf migratory group. This results in the sum of the remaining commercial zone allocations not equaling “100%”, and thus requires reallocation between the remaining commercial zones. Alternative 2 would reallocate the 31.91% of unallocated quota equally among the remaining zones, while Alternative 3 would do the same based on the proportion of the remaining allocation held by each zone. Alternative 4 was proposed by the Gulf CMP AP, with the intent of providing additional allocation to each zone, but especially to the Gulf Northern Zone. This action was created to ease the concerns of traveling fishermen from the east coast of Florida coming to the Western and Northern zones to fish king mackerel. Staff will prepare a demonstration of the effects of the alternatives for Full Council.

Action 8

Staff described an issue with the original verbiage in Action 8, which was not explicit on from where the allocation to be transferred to the commercial sector would originate, with respect to the Council’s intent. The IPT provided corrected language to reflect the Council’s intent.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, to accept the IPT’s recommendations to give staff editorial license to update Action 8, “Revise the Recreational and Commercial Allocations for the Gulf Migratory Group King Mackerel”, to reflect the Council’s intent.

Motion carried.

Committee members asked whether reallocating 15% of the stock ACL to the commercial sector had been considered. Staff replied that since 15% falls within the options currently being considered, the analyses presented would account for a 15% allocation transfer. Another committee member asked whether the commercial sector had been penalized for exceeding their allocation in the past. Staff responded that the commercial sector is closed by NMFS when their

allocation is met or expected to be met, and that sometimes that closure did not close the commercial fishery in time to prevent small overages. However, because the stock ACL had not been exceeded, accountability measures beyond a season closure had not been implemented.

Action 9

Staff briefly described the methods used to determine the effects of raising the recreational bag limit for Gulf king mackerel. Staff noted that even if everyone currently keeping two king mackerel per person kept up to four, and 20% of the stock ACL was added to the existing commercial ACL, it would be unlikely that the stock ACL would be exceeded.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 9, “Modify the Recreational Bag Limit for Gulf Migratory Group King Mackerel”, to select Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative.

Alternative 2: Increase the bag limit to three fish per person per day.

Motion carried.

CMP Amendment 28

Staff reviewed the status and timing of CMP Amendment 28 (**Tab C, No. 5**). The South Atlantic Council has discontinued work on this amendment, and the Gulf Council has directed staff to continue developing alternatives. Due to the joint nature of the CMP FMP, this results in staff being unable to proceed with developing the document, since there is no participation by, or input from, the South Atlantic Council. Staff noted that the document would either need to be completely restructured, or the Gulf Council should reconsider moving forward with Amendment 28 at this time.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, to discontinue work on CMP Amendment 28.

Motion carried.

Other Business

The committee chair asked if there was any other business to be brought before the committee. Science Center staff noted that a potential funding opportunity may make available a great deal of data from Mexican fisheries managers on a number of species, including CMP species like king mackerel. Whether such funding is made available should be known in the spring of 2016.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my report.