Coastal Migratory Pelagics
Amendment 28
King & Spanish Mackerel Permits
What is Scoping?

The Council takes a fishery issue to scoping to identify potential impacts and reasonable alternatives. It is the first and best opportunity for the public to make suggestions or to raise issues and concerns before the Council begins developing an amendment.

How does scoping affect fisheries management?

Comments provided during the scoping process will be reported to the Council and incorporated in the development of management options. Once the options are developed the public hearing process will begin, and you will have the opportunity to comment on the management alternatives under consideration. Your input will be considered as the Council deliberates and chooses the most appropriate management measures.
Commercial king and Spanish mackerel permits are valid for fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Mid-Atlantic regions. However, there are two separate migratory groups of each species, with separate regulations for each region. There are some fishermen who travel and fish in multiple regions and some that only fish in specific areas. There are also some ‘full-time’ king mackerel fishermen whose primary target is king mackerel and there are some king mackerel fishermen that may be considered ‘part-time’ because they diversify harvest and only target king mackerel some of the time.

There is concern with increasing effort in specific areas of the fishery. More vessels fishing under the same quota could result in lower catches for each individual vessel. Recent increases in effort in east Florida south of Cape Canaveral, and in the Gulf from fishermen that travel over from the South Atlantic, have triggered the Councils to consider ways to reduce participation in overcapitalized regions.

Establishing criteria for future permits would be a traditional solution to overcapitalization, but it may be difficult to implement in the mackerel fishery. Historically, vessels fish in multiple regions and there are different trip limits and seasons for each region. Consequently, setting permit qualifications based on landings is biased because management does not allow fishermen to participate at the same levels in the different regions. Instead, the Council’s are considering creating separate permits for each species and region as a way to control overcapitalization in individual regions. Qualification criteria would still be necessary to determine who receives a permit, and those criteria do not necessarily have to be based on landings.
Scope of Actions

King Mackerel Permits

A moratorium on the issuance of king mackerel permits has been in place since 1998. When the moratorium when into place there were 2,172 permits and now, there are 1,455.

To establish separate commercial king mackerel permits for each region, the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils must develop qualifying criteria to determine which permit(s) would be granted to each vessel. The Councils could grant each vessel separate permits to fish in both the Gulf and the Atlantic, or limit each vessel to one permit (and thereby one region).

Scoping Questions:

• Should separate commercial permits be established for king mackerel in the Gulf and Atlantic regions?
• Should permit holders be allowed to receive both permits or only one?
• If only one permit is granted per permit holder, how will the determination be made if a permit holder qualifies for both?
  • Secondary qualification criteria (such as hailing port)
  • Permit holder choice
• What qualifying criteria should be used for each permit?
  • Landings threshold
  • Trips threshold
  • Days at sea threshold
  • Hailing port
• Should either Council establish qualifying criteria that will reduce the number of permits?
Spanish Mackerel Permits

Commercial Spanish mackerel permits are open access; anyone can purchase a permit from National Marine Fisheries Service with no qualifiers. The Councils could easily replace the current Spanish mackerel permit with separate Gulf and Atlantic Spanish mackerel permits. Upon renewal of a current permit, fishermen could choose to purchase one or both of the new permits.

The South Atlantic Council may consider establishing a limited access system for the Atlantic Spanish mackerel permit. There are currently 1,717 Spanish mackerel permits. If a limited access system is implemented, no new permits would be issued. This will not actively reduce the number of permits, but it will set a maximum number of permits. If a permit is not renewed within a permissible amount of time, it would be eliminated.

If a reduction in the number of permits is desired, then qualifying criteria would need to be considered.

**Scoping Questions:**

- Should separate commercial permits be established for Spanish mackerel in the Gulf and Atlantic regions?
- Does either Council wish to establish a limited access system for Spanish mackerel permits?
  - Cap the number of permits at the current level
  - Set the qualifying criteria
  - Establish temporary moratorium during which qualifying criteria could be met
- What qualifying criteria should be used for limited access permits or to reduce the number of permits?
  - Landings threshold
  - Trips threshold
  - Days at sea threshold
Scoping Meeting Dates and Locations

Monday - March 30, 2015
Renaissance Mobile Riverview
64 South Water Street
Mobile, AL 36602
(251) 438-4000

Tuesday - March 31, 2015
Golden Nugget
151 Beach Boulevard
Biloxi, MS 39530
(228) 435-4500

Monday - April 13, 2015
Hilton Garden Inn
1101 US Highway 231
Panama City, FL 32405
(850) 392-1093

Monday - April 13, 2015
Hilton St. Petersburg
950 Lake Carillon Drive
St. Petersburg, FL 33716
(727) 540-0050

Sunday - April 19, 2015
Doubletree Grand Key Resort
3990 South Roosevelt Blvd.
Key West, FL 33040
(305) 293-1818

Thursday - April 23, 2015
Hyatt Place San Antonio
7615 Jones Maltsberger Road
San Antonio, TX 78216
(210) 930-2333

Friday - April 24, 2015
Hampton Inn & Suites
2208 Highway 361
Port Aransas, TX 78373
(361) 749-8888

Monday - April 27, 2015
Hilton Galveston Island
5400 Seawall Blvd.
Galveston Island, TX 77551
(409) 744-5000

Tuesday - April 28, 2015
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
195 Ludwig Annex
Grand Isle, LA 70358

All workshops begin at 6 pm local time and will conclude after public input has ended, but no later than 9 pm.

If you are unable to attend a scoping meeting, your input is still important. Submit comments online at: http://gulfcouncil.org/council_meetings/comment_forms/MackerelAmendment26.php, or click on the thermometer icon on our home page.
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