

Mackerel Committee Report

February 1, 2017

Pam Dana – Chair

Patrick Banks – Vice Chair

CMP Advisory Panel Summary

Staff briefed the Committee on the proceedings of the CMP Advisory Panel (AP) meeting from November 2016. The CMP AP Chair, Captain Martin Fisher, fielded questions from Committee members about the sentiments of the AP on various topics, including CMP Amendment 29. Broadly, the AP supports the no action alternative with respect to allocation sharing between the fishing sectors. Their concerns include increased participation in Gulf king mackerel fishing by traveling fishermen, the effect of increasing the recreational bag limit from two to three fish per person per day, and the general degree of uncertainty surrounding the recreational landings. They also expressed a desire for increased data gathering and reporting for commercial landings, an interest in zone-specific payback provisions (if accompanied by increased resolution in landings reporting), and supported increased scientific research into king mackerel.

Committee members discussed the membership of the AP, with it being noted that representation of fishermen from the southwest Florida region is currently limited to two members. Additionally, staff noted that the Council recently cosigned a letter with the South Atlantic Council to request the expedited implementation of CMP Amendment 26.

King Mackerel Projections Update

Dr. Joe Powers (SSC representative) provided an overview of the Gulf king mackerel landings projections update provided to the SSC by the SEFSC. The original benchmark assessment (SEDAR 38) provided projections through 2019, using landings data through 2012 and assuming 2012 landings for the fishing years beginning in 2013 and 2014. When the Council requested the landings to be updated, that was *exactly* what was done. No new data on age or length composition, growth, reproduction, or other model inputs were updated. The estimated 2013 and 2014 fishing years' landings data were replaced with the actual data for those years, which were higher than what was previously estimated, yet still well below the stock ACL. Interestingly though, the updated projections showed a decreased ABC for 2017-2019 compared to that estimated by SEDAR 38, even though the stock ACL has not been harvested since 2000. The SEFSC cautioned that the degree of uncertainty in the updated projections was considerably larger than that of the SEDAR 38 assessment, especially due to the many other data inputs which were not also updated. Further, the landings for the 2014/15 fishing year, which were 63% higher than the previous fishing year, served as the last year of data for this projections update. The landings for the 2015/16 fishing year, which were equivalent to those from the 2013/2014 fishing year, were not used due to the timing of updating the projections. Committee members discussed the above points at length, with feedback provided by Dr. Powers, Council staff, and the SEFSC. Ultimately, the SSC recommended not using the updated projections, largely due to the high degree of uncertainty in those projections.

CMP Amendment 29

Staff reviewed the Council's current preferred alternatives in Action 1 (Alternative 2, Options 2b and 2g) and Action 2 (Alternative 3). Public comments received during public hearings and through the online comment portal on the Council website were summarized, with staff noting that support for allocation sharing seeming to wane as one moved from the eastern to the western Gulf. A Committee member noted that millions of pounds of king mackerel are being left in the water annually, and that even with allocation sharing and an increased recreational bag limit, there will still be millions of pounds left in the water.

Staff asked for clarification on the Council's intent with respect to the ACL to be used when determining whether allocation sharing will occur. NOAA General Counsel noted that the codified text for Amendment 29 specified that the current sector allocations would be used, while the amendment specified that the allocation used for a given year, regardless of allocation sharing, would be used. Committee members clarified that their intent was reflected in the codified text, and staff noted that the text of the amendment would be properly modified.

The Committee discussed whether there was any desire to revise the current preferred alternatives and/or whether to proceed with final action on CMP Amendment 29. Based on the CMP AP summary, the SSC review of the updated projections, and public comments received, the Committee determined it important to defer further action until Full Council, thus allowing for consideration of public testimony.

Madam Chair, this concludes my report.