

GULF COUNCIL

MACKEREL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Gulf Council Office

Tampa, Florida

June 3, 2025

**VOTING MEMBERS**

- 10 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 11 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 12 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 13 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
- 14 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 15 John Sanchez.....Florida
- 16 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- 17 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- 18 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- 19 Ed Walker.....Florida
- 20 Troy Williamson.....Texas

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

- 23 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 24 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 25 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
- 26 Troy Frady.....Alabama
- 27 Tom Frazer.....Florida
- 28 LT Jason Morton.....USCG
- 29 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi

**STAFF**

- 32 Matt Freeman.....Economist
- 33 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 34 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 35 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 36 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 37 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- 38 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 39 Camilla Shireman.....Administrative & Communications Assistant
- 40 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
- 41 Verena Wang.....Ecosystem Analyst

**OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

- 44 Frank Helies.....NOAA
- 45 Anne Kersting.....NOAA
- 46 Jessica McCawley.....FL
- 47 Clay Porch.....SEFSC

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PAGE 7: Motion to recommend the council approve Modifications to Spanish Mackerel Catch Limits in the Gulf of America and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make necessary changes in the document. The council chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate. The motion carried on page 7.

- - -

1 The Mackerel Management Committee of the Gulf Council convened at  
2 the Gulf Council Office in Tampa, Florida on Tuesday afternoon,  
3 June 3, 2025, and was called to order by Vice Chairman Ed Walker.

4  
5 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**  
6 **APPROVAL OF JANUARY 2025 MINUTES**  
7 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**  
8

9 **VICE CHAIRMAN ED WALKER:** I will call to order the Mackerel  
10 Management Committee. Do you need me to read the member's names?  
11 All right. Members of the Mackerel Committee are Mr. Geeslin, Dr.  
12 Banks, Mr. Anson, Dr. Sweetman, Mr. McDermott, Mr. Schieble, Dr.  
13 Overton, Mr. Sanchez, Mr. Strelcheck, and Mr. Williamson.

14  
15 The first up order of business is Adoption of the Agenda. Can I  
16 get a motion to adopt the agenda, if there are no edits? Motion  
17 by Dr. Sweetman, and a second by Dr. Banks. Thank you. Next is  
18 Approval of the January 2025 minutes. If there's no issues there,  
19 can I get a motion to approve the minutes? Dr. Sweetman and Dr.  
20 Banks. Thank you. All right. First up is the Action Guide and  
21 Next Steps in Spanish Mackerel, and Dr. Hollensead is going to  
22 lead us through that.

23  
24 **FINAL ACTION: MODIFICATION TO THE GULF MIGRATORY GROUP SPANISH**  
25 **MACKEREL CATCH LIMITS (AMENDMENT 14)**  
26

27 **DR. LISA HOLLENSHAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so there's only  
28 one item to come before the Mackerel Committee today, but it's got  
29 these three components, and so it's going to consider the Draft  
30 Framework Amendment 14, which will be updating Spanish mackerel  
31 catch limits, and so that's one action in it. That is based on  
32 the most recent stock assessment.

33  
34 Then in Action -- There's a second action in this framework, which  
35 would look at modifying the management trigger for the in-season  
36 accountability measure, and so preferred alternatives have been  
37 selected for each one of these actions, and so the document is  
38 ready for taking on to final action, should the committee desire  
39 to do so.

40  
41 Within that, we also solicited public comment, which council staff  
42 will provide for you. We also have codified text, and we have  
43 NOAA General Counsel, Ms. Kersting, who can help with that if  
44 there's any questions associated with that, and so, Mr. Chair, I  
45 would first hand it over to Ms. Muehlstein to give the summary of  
46 the public comment.

47  
48 **VICE CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Ms. Muehlstein.

1  
2 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Thank you, and so we did produce a  
3 public hearing video for this, and we did send out a push  
4 notification through Fish Rules, in addition to advertising this  
5 via press release, as well as social media.  
6

7 To answer your earlier question, Mr. Chair, there were 3,422 click-  
8 throughs from the Fish Rules post, and that was both on this action  
9 and on the shallow-water grouper action, and so that's, you know,  
10 sort of the return on investment there. We received six comments  
11 here. None of the comments were action-specific, but I will go  
12 over what we heard.  
13

14 First, we heard that the council is basing decisions on unreliable  
15 data. We heard that the health of the stock appears to be  
16 increasing in the last few years and that the average size of fish  
17 is up. We heard that the stock is overfished and that schools are  
18 not prevalent off of Mississippi like they once were.  
19

20 We heard that the commercial fisheries should be reduced, along  
21 with the recreational sector, and that gillnets should be  
22 abolished. We also heard that the current bag limit is too high,  
23 that lowering the bag limit from fifteen fish shouldn't bother  
24 responsible fishermen, and we heard that the bag limit should be  
25 increased to twenty-five fish per person, so that people can spend  
26 more time and more money fishing.  
27

28 We heard that pressure on Spanish is increasing, with declines in  
29 availability of cobia and king mackerel, and we also heard that  
30 anglers don't keep many Spanish mackerel, and that's why we're not  
31 reaching the quota.  
32

33 **VICE CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you, Ms. Muehlstein, and so I guess  
34 we're going to go through the document, Dr. Hollensead.  
35

36 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, sir, Mr. Chair. Bernie, if you wouldn't  
37 mind pulling up the document for me, please, and going just real  
38 quick to the purpose and need.  
39

40 Again, while that's getting put up, just to remind the committee  
41 that the updating of the catch limits is based on the results of  
42 SEDAR 81, the most recent stock assessment, and catch advice was  
43 provided by the SSC, and so updating those would then bring us in  
44 line with the best available information. The purpose and need  
45 speaks to that here, and, if there's no questions to that, Bernie,  
46 would you mind going to Action 1, please?  
47

48 So, again, as I mentioned, you know, this would be updating the

1 catch limits based on SEDAR 81. Preferred Alternative 2 would  
2 take those updated catch limits based from the stock assessment  
3 and would set the stock -- Bernie, do you mind scrolling down just  
4 a little bit?

5  
6 Alternative 2 would maintain what's on the books, but Preferred  
7 Alternative 2 would instead take the OFL and ABC, as recommended  
8 by the Gulf Council's SSC, for the subsequent years, and they are  
9 listed, and the stock ACL would be set equal to the ABC, and so,  
10 in Preferred Alternative 2, the ABC is equal to the stock ACL.

11  
12 Alternative three would implement the ACT control rule and put in  
13 a 10 percent buffer, but, as it stands right now, the committee  
14 had previously selected Alternative 2 as preferred, which would  
15 keep the ABC and the ACL equal to each other, and so that's the  
16 differences between the alternatives there.

17  
18 **VICE CHAIRMAN WALKER:** All right, and I know we've had a lot of  
19 discussion about this, but is there any more discussion on this  
20 action on Spanish mackerel. Okay. We'll move on.

21  
22 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** Okay. Bernie, if you wouldn't mind scrolling  
23 down to Action 2, and so, in Action 2, there's only two  
24 alternatives for this action. The no action would retain the  
25 current accountability measure, or AM, where the Regional  
26 Administrator would close the fishing season for Gulf Spanish  
27 mackerel for the commercial and recreational fishing sectors when  
28 the stock ACL is reached or projected to be reached.

29  
30 The committee has selected as preferred Alternative 2, which would  
31 modify that slightly, and so, if the stock ACL is exceeded in a  
32 fishing year, then, in the following fishing year, the Regional  
33 Administrator will close the fishing season for Gulf Spanish  
34 mackerel.

35  
36 **VICE CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Discussion on that? I see a lot of nodding  
37 heads. I know we've been working on this for a long time. All  
38 right.

39  
40 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** Okay, Mr. Chair, and then the one last thing would  
41 ask Bernie to please just pull up the codified text just for the  
42 committee's review, and, if you have any questions, Ms. Kersting  
43 can answer those for you at any point.

44  
45 The IPT, we have gone through and reviewed this, and it is  
46 reflective of what's in the document, but I just wanted to make  
47 sure, if anybody had any last questions, that it's made available  
48 for you all to look at.

1  
2 **VICE CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Any discussion on the codified text? I  
3 asked Ms. Kersting if she wanted to read the whole codified text,  
4 and she has politely declined. She said she would if requested,  
5 but we're not going there.

6  
7 Okay, and that's it for Spanish then, right, and so, if there's no  
8 input, we'll just send this over to Full Council as written, or do  
9 you need any action from us? We have preferreds, I see.

10  
11 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Yes, Mr. Chair, and, if you were amenable, I think  
12 Bernie can help draft that motion language, such that it would  
13 indicate to Full Council that the committee had suggested it for  
14 moving to final action.

15  
16 **VICE CHAIRMAN WALKER:** All right. If Dr. Sweetman would help us  
17 out with that.

18  
19 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** I can certainly do that, Captain Walker. I'll  
20 just wait for Bernie to get up that language. Okay. **To recommend**  
21 **the council approve Modifications to Spanish Mackerel Catch Limits**  
22 **in the Gulf of America and that it be forwarded to the Secretary**  
23 **of Commerce for review and implementation and deem the codified**  
24 **text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license**  
25 **to make necessary changes in the document. The council chair is**  
26 **given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as**  
27 **necessary and appropriate.**

28  
29 **VICE CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. We have a motion on the board. Do  
30 we have a second? Dr. Banks. Thank you. Any discussion? **Is**  
31 **there any opposition to the motion on the board? Seeing none,**  
32 **motion carries.** I believe that's it for Mackerel, and for this  
33 day, the best I can tell, Mr. Chair.

34  
35 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Mr. Walker, unless there's any other business  
36 that needs to come before the Mackerel Committee.

37  
38 **VICE CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Any other business for the Mackerel  
39 Committee? Seeing none, the Mackerel Committee adjourns. Thank  
40 you, sir.

41  
42 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 3, 2025.)

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