Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505

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FB11-077

NOAA Seeks Public Comment on Amendment 18 for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Species in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic to Establish Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures

Comment Period Ends November 28, 2011

NOAA Fisheries Service is seeking public comment on Amendment 18 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic. Amendment 18 would establish annual catch limits and accountability measures for king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia. The Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (Councils) have submitted Amendment 18 to NOAA Fisheries Service for review, approval, and implementation. The Notice of Availability for public comment on this amendment was published in the *Federal Register* on September 29, 2011 (76 FR 60444).

Background

The fishery management plan is jointly managed by the Councils. NOAA Fisheries Service and the Councils developed Amendment 18 to address new requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, which requires establishing the following for most federally managed stocks:

- *Annual catch limits*, the highest levels of landings that are acceptable to maintain the stock.
- *Annual catch targets*, acceptable levels of landings that provide a buffer, if needed, for management uncertainty (optional).
- *Accountability measures*, which help keep landings within the catch limits or catch targets, or make adjustments if those levels are exceeded.

Actions in Amendment 18

- Remove four species (cero, little tunny, dolphin, and Gulf of Mexico bluefish) from federal management.
- Establish annual catch limits, annual catch targets, and accountability measures for king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia.
- Establish standardized procedures to set the allowable biological catch, which is the level of harvest intended to prevent overfishing.
- Establish separate migratory groups for cobia, and set commercial and recreational allocations for Atlantic migratory group cobia.
- Revise thresholds used to determine the status of stocks, such as overfishing (rate of removal is too high) and overfished (population abundance is too low).
- Revise the framework procedure, which allows for more timely implementation of routine regulatory changes.

Request for Comments

Written comments on this amendment must be received no later than November 28, 2011, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service. See the Addresses section for information on where and how to submit comments.

Addresses

Electronic copies of the amendment may be obtained from the NOAA Fisheries Service Web site http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/MackerelHomepage.htm or the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal www.regulation.gov.

You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- Electronic Submissions: Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov. All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted to www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NOAA Fisheries Service will accept anonymous comments.
- To submit comments through the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov, click on

"submit a comment," then enter "NOAA-NMFS-2011-0202" in the keyword search and click on "search." To view posted comments during the comment period, enter "NOAA-NMFS-2011-0202" in the keyword search and click on "search." You may submit attachments to electronic comments in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

- Mail: Susan Gerhart, NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505

Comments received through means not specified in this bulletin will not be considered.

Comments received by November 28, 2011, whether specifically directed to the amendment or the proposed rule, will be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service in its decision to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the amendment. Comments received after that date will not be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service in this decision. All comments received by NOAA Fisheries Service on the amendment or the proposed rule during their respective comment periods will be addressed in the final rule.

For more information on Amendment 18 please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions on the NOAA Fisheries Service Web site.

If you would like to receive these fishery bulletins via e-mail as soon as they are published, e-mail us at: SERO.Communications.Comments@noaa.gov.

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