

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Part 622**

[Docket No. 101206604-1758-02]

RIN 0648-XD779

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic; Trip Limit Reduction

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; trip limit reduction.

SUMMARY: NMFS reduces the trip limit for the commercial sector of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel in the southern zone to 1,500 lb (680 kg) of Spanish mackerel per day in or from the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). This trip limit reduction is necessary to protect the Spanish mackerel resource.

DATES: The rule is effective 6 a.m., local time, February 20, 2015, until 12:01 a.m., local time, March 1, 2015, unless changed by subsequent notification in the **Federal Register**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Susan Gerhart, telephone: 727-824-5305, or email: susan.gerhart@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The fishery for coastal migratory pelagic fish (king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia) is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic (FMP). The FMP was prepared by the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (Councils) and is implemented under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

Framework Amendment 1 to the FMP (79 FR 69058, November 20, 2014)

increased the commercial annual catch limit (equal to the commercial quota) to 3.33 million lb (1.51 million kg) for the Atlantic migratory group of Spanish mackerel. The Atlantic EEZ is divided into a northern and southern zone for management purposes of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel. The southern zone for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel extends from 30°42'45.6" N. lat., which is a line directly east from the Georgia/Florida boundary, to 25°20.4' N. lat., which is a line directly east from the Miami-Dade/Monroe County, Florida, boundary. The northern and southern zones will have their own quotas as of March 1, 2015, the beginning of the next fishing year, with implementation of Amendment 20B to the FMP (80 FR 4216, January, 27, 2015).

For the southern zone, seasonally variable trip limits are based on an adjusted commercial quota of 3.08 million lb (1.40 million kg). The adjusted commercial quota is calculated to allow continued harvest in the southern zone at a set rate for the remainder of the current fishing year, February 28, 2015, in accordance with 50 CFR 622.385(b)(2). As specified at 50 CFR 622.385(b)(1)(ii)(B), beginning December 1, annually, the trip limit is unlimited on weekdays and limited to 1,500 lb (680 kg) of Spanish mackerel per day on weekends. As specified at 50 CFR 622.385(b)(1)(ii)(C), after 75 percent of the adjusted commercial quota of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel is taken until 100 percent of the adjusted commercial quota is taken, Spanish mackerel in or from the EEZ in the southern zone may not be possessed on board or landed from a permitted vessel in amounts exceeding 1,500 lb (680 kg) per day.

NMFS has determined that 75 percent of the adjusted commercial quota for Atlantic group Spanish mackerel has been harvested. Accordingly, the 1,500-lb (680-kg) per day commercial trip limit applies to Spanish mackerel in or from the EEZ in the southern zone effective 6 a.m., local time, February 20, 2015, until 12:01 a.m., local time, March

1, 2015, unless changed by subsequent notification in the **Federal Register**.

Classification

The Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NMFS, has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.385(b)(1)(ii)(C) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

These measures are exempt from the procedures of the Regulatory Flexibility Act because the temporary rule is issued without opportunity for prior notice and comment.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and the opportunity for public comment on this temporary rule. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule itself has already been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the trip limit reduction.

Allowing prior notice and opportunity for public comment is contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement this action to protect the Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel resource because the capacity of the commercial fleet allows for rapid harvest of the quota. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and could potentially result in a harvest well in excess of the established quota.

For the aforementioned reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: February 17, 2015.

Emily H. Menashes,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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