

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 961204340-7087-02; I.D. 112597A]

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: Trip limit reduction.

SUMMARY: NMFS reduces the commercial trip limit in the hook-and-line fishery for king mackerel in the Florida west coast sub-zone to 500 lb (227 kg) of king mackerel per day in or from the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). This trip limit reduction is necessary to protect the overfished Gulf king mackerel resource.

DATES: Effective 12:01 a.m., local time, November 28, 1997, through June 30, 1998, unless changed by further notification in the **Federal Register**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mark F. Godcharles, 813-570-5305.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The fishery for coastal migratory pelagic fish (king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, cero, cobia, little tunny, dolphin, and, in the Gulf of Mexico only, bluefish) 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 by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

Based on the Councils' recommended total allowable catch and the allocation ratios in the FMP, NMFS implemented a commercial quota for the Gulf migratory group of king mackerel in the Florida west coast sub-zone of 865,000 pounds (392,357 kg). That quota was further divided into two equal quotas of 432,500 lb (196,179 kg) for vessels in each of two groups by gear types—vessels using run-around gillnets and vessels using hook-and-line gear.

In accordance with 50 CFR 622.44(a)(2)(ii)(B), from the date that 75 percent of the subzone's hook-and-line gear quota has been harvested until a closure of the west coast subzone's hook-and-line fishery has been effected or the fishing year ends, king mackerel in or from the EEZ may be possessed on

board or landed from a permitted vessel in amounts not exceeding 500 lb (227 kg) per day.

NMFS has determined that 75 percent of the hook-and-line quota for Gulf group king mackerel from the Florida west coast subzone has been reached. Accordingly, a 500-lb (227-kg) trip limit applies to vessels in the commercial hook-and-line fishery for king mackerel in or from the EEZ in the Florida west coast subzone effective 12:01 a.m., local time, November 28, 1997.

The Florida west coast subzone extends from 87°31'06" W. long. (due south of the Alabama/Florida boundary) to: (1) 25°20.4' N. lat. (due east of the Dade/Monroe County, FL, boundary) through March 31, 1998; and (2) 25°48' N. lat. (due west of the Monroe/Collier County, FL, boundary) from April 1, 1998, through October 31, 1998.

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.44(a)(2)(iii) and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: November 26, 1997.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 97-31582 Filed 11-26-97; 3:13 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F