



ROY COOPER
Governor

ELIZABETH S. BISER
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

FF-21-2022

PROCLAMATION

RE: KING MACKEREL – COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL

This proclamation supersedes FF-17-2022 dated March 15, 2022. It establishes management measures for the commercial and recreational harvest of king mackerel in N.C. Coastal Fishing Waters in compliance with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plan.

Kathy B. Rawls, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective **at 12:01 A.M., Saturday, April 2, 2022**, the following restrictions shall apply to the king mackerel fisheries:

I. **SIZE LIMIT**

It is unlawful to possess king mackerel less than 24 inches fork length in a commercial operation or for recreational purposes.

II. **COMMERCIAL HARVEST LIMITS**

- A. It is unlawful to possess more than 3 king mackerel per person per day in the Atlantic Ocean by hook and line except for persons holding a valid National Marine Fisheries Service King Mackerel Commercial Vessel Permit.
- B. It is unlawful to possess more than 3 king mackerel per person per day in the Atlantic Ocean beyond three miles in a commercial fishing operation except for persons holding a valid National Marine Fisheries Service King Mackerel Commercial Vessel Permit.
- C. It is unlawful to possess aboard or land from a vessel, or combination of vessels that form a single operation, more than 3,500 pounds of Spanish or king mackerel, in the aggregate, in any one day.

III. **GEAR RESTRICTIONS**

It is unlawful to use gill nets in the Atlantic Ocean to take more than 3 king mackerel per person per day south of Cape Lookout (34° 37.3000' N latitude).

IV. **FOR-HIRE VESSEL (While engaged in a For-Hire Vessel operation as defined by G.S 113-174) HARVEST LIMITS**

Charter vessels or head boats that hold a valid National Marine Fisheries Service Coastal Migratory Pelagic (Charter Boat and Head Boat) permit shall comply with the king mackerel possession limits established in Section V. when fishing with more than three persons (including the captain and mate) on board.

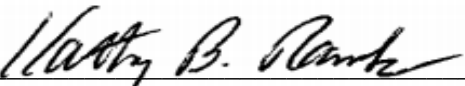
V. **RECREATIONAL HARVEST LIMITS**

It is unlawful to possess more than 3 king mackerel per person per day taken for recreational purposes.

VI. GENERAL INFORMATION:

- A. This proclamation is issued under the authority of N.C.G. S. 113-134; 113-134.1; 113-170.4; 113-170.5; 113-182; 113-182.1; 113-221.1; 143B-289.52 and N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rules 15A NCAC 03H .0103 and 03M .0512.
- B. It is unlawful to violate the provisions of any proclamation issued by the Fisheries Director under their delegated authority pursuant to N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03H .0103.
- C. The intent of this proclamation is to allow harvest of king mackerel in compliance with the and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagics.
- D. The Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils approved Amendment 20A to the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagics prohibiting the sale of king and Spanish mackerel caught under the bag limit without a valid federal commercial permit. This prohibition on sale also applies to charter vessels and headboats that hold both valid federal charter/headboat and commercial permits, when operating as a charter. An exemption was made to allow sale of fish from state-permitted recreational fishing tournaments that donate all money from the sale to charity. The amendment also eliminates the income qualification requirements for Commercial King and Spanish Mackerel Permits. The amendment and final rule implementing the regulations is located at: <https://safmc.net/fishery-management-plans-amendments/coastal-migratory-pelagics/>.
- E. The Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils approved Amendment 26 to the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagics that allows for limited retention and sale of king mackerel caught incidental to directed commercial shark fishing with gill nets by vessels that hold both valid federal Commercial Directed Shark and Commercial King Mackerel Permits. This exemption only applies to directed shark fishing activities south of Cape Lookout, where gill nets are not an allowable gear in the king mackerel fishery. North of Cape Lookout, gill nets are a legal gear in the commercial king mackerel fishery (see 50 CFR §622.375(a)(1)(i)). The amendment and final rule implementing the regulations is located at: <https://safmc.net/fishery-management-plans-amendments/coastal-migratory-pelagics/>.
- F. The Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils approved Framework Amendment 5 to the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagics that removes the prohibition that a person aboard a vessel with a Federal Commercial King Mackerel Permit or Spanish Mackerel Permit may not fish for or retain king or Spanish mackerel under the recreational bag limits when the commercial season for either species is closed. It allows commercial fishermen to retain the recreational bag limit of these fish after the commercial season is closed and when the recreational season is open, however, purchase or sale of such fish retained under these limits is not allowed (see 50 CFR §622.384(e) and 622.386). The amendment and rule implementing the regulations can be found at: <https://safmc.net/fishery-management-plans-amendments/coastal-migratory-pelagics/>.
- G. Vessels holding both a valid National Marine Fisheries Service Atlantic Charter/Headboat Coastal Migratory Pelagics Permit and either a valid National Marine Fisheries Service Commercial Spanish Mackerel Permit OR Commercial King Mackerel Permit are considered to be operating as a charter boat/headboat when fishing with more than three persons (including captain and mate) onboard (see 50 CFR § 622.2).
- H. Provisions for individuals onboard a charter or headboat to possess multiple daily bag limits may be found at 50 CFR §622.382(2) and state that a person who is on a trip that spans more than 24 hours may possess no more than two daily bag limits, provided such trip is on a vessel that is operating as a charter vessel or headboat, the vessel has two licensed operators aboard, and each passenger is issued and has in possession a receipt issued on behalf of the vessel that verifies the length of the trip.

- I. The federal Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is defined as waters of the Atlantic Ocean from three to 200 miles seaward of the shoreline.
- J. King mackerel harvested as part of a licensed recreational fishing tournament may be sold in accordance with N.C.G.S. 113-168.4(c) and N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03O .0102.
- K. In accordance with N.C. General Statute 113-221.1(c) all persons who may be affected by proclamations issued by the Fisheries Director are under a duty to keep themselves informed of current proclamations.
- L. Contact N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, P.O. Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557; 252-726-7021 or 800-682-2632 for more information or visit the division website at www.ncmarinefisheries.net.
- M. **This proclamation supersedes FF-17-2022 dated March 15, 2022. It establishes management measures for the commercial and recreational harvest of king mackerel in N.C. Coastal Fishing Waters in compliance with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plan.**

By: 
Kathy B. Rawls, Director
DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES

April 1, 2022
1:35 P.M.