

PROJECT FISHSMART WORKGROUP
CONSENSUS GOAL AND RECOMMENDATIONS
(Adopted Unanimously November 7, 2008)

CONSENSUS GOAL FOR THE ATLANTIC KING MACKEREL FISHERY

A sustainable Atlantic King Mackerel (AKM) fishery should be managed to prevent overfishing from occurring, prevent the species from being overfished, to ensure optimum yield is not exceeded, while maintaining the genetic diversity of fish and providing acceptable levels of access and allocation for all sectors while conserving biological and ecological functions.

THE FISHSMART AKM MODELING AND CONSENSUS PROCESS

The FishSmart AKM approach featured an interactive stakeholder driven consensus-building process that sought to improve stakeholder input and contributions to managing a sustainable AKM fishery by:

- Establishing a shared goal for the AKM;
- Exploring potential consequences of alternative management actions through scientific modeling; and
- Developing recommendations informed by science to best achieve the AKM goal.

The FishSmart Workgroup asked that the following performance indicators be modeled to inform their evaluation of alternative management actions and their recommendations:

- Spawning Population in Weight, Numbers
- Commercial Harvest in Weight, Numbers
- Recreational Harvest in Numbers
- Tournament Harvest in Numbers
- Harvest of Fish between 10 and 12 pounds (Commercial Target)
- Harvest of Fish > 20 pounds (Recreational Target)
- Harvest of Fish > 50 pounds (Tournament Target)
- Average Fish Weights in each Sector
- Proportion of Population \geq 15 years old
- Number of Deaths due to Release Mortality
- Average Weight of Spawners

Consistent with the Workgroup's consensus goal for the AKM fishery, the recommendations below are organized into four categories including: AKM management principles recommendations, AKM management and regulation recommendations, recreational fishing actions and behavior recommendations, and educational initiatives recommendations.

NOTE: All of the FishSmart recommendations were developed through an interactive consensus process and reflect 75% or greater support by the Workgroup members. The members were invited to serve in order to bring to the FishSmart table a diverse range of fishery stakeholder perspectives and expertise. Stakeholder groups include independent angler, angler association, charter, tournament, scientific and management, environmental, tackle/bait shop owner, and commercial interests. These consensus recommendations reflect their individual expertise and collective judgment and not necessarily those of the organizations who the members participate in and represent.

A. MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A.1. Increased and ongoing collaboration among all fishery stakeholders, managers, scientists and regulators will result in:

- Quality input that will be key to achieving a more sustainable fishery;
- A fair allocation among stakeholders;
- A maximum access to the AKM fishery;
- An effective management process.

A.2. A commitment to the best available science conveyed to the stakeholders in a transparent, consistent and understandable format should lead to effective management of the AKM fishery.

OTHER KING MACKEREL STOCK PRINCIPLES RECOMMENDATIONS

A.3. The Atlantic and Gulf Councils should consider the effects of fishing on the stock in Mexican waters in their future stock assessments.

A.4. The Council should consider the Gulf of Mexico KM stock as well as the Atlantic stock before any adjustments are made to the Atlantic KM stock quota. Mixing zone allocation decisions should be informed by a stakeholder process and based on a comprehensive analysis of the underlying biology of the two fisheries (AKM and GKM).

A.5. Decisions affecting the AKM fishery should be considered in conjunction with the GKM fishery before changes in management are made.

OTHER MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES RECOMMENDATIONS

A.6. The Council's stakeholder process should be expanded to include a more direct and interactive stakeholder driven process that seeks to improve input in developing scientifically-based management advice and exploring potential consequences of alternative management actions, such as the FishSmart process, to guide the Council's management decisions.

A.7. The Council should continue to focus on AKM in the context of an ecosystem based management approach.

A.8. Artificial habitats and their effects on the King Mackerel fishery population and migration patterns should be studied, and as appropriate, considered in management decisions.

B. MANAGEMENT AND REGULATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Workgroup considered a number of different management actions and combination of actions.

B.1. The Workgroup recommends that the management options considered by the Council should be designed to meet the following minimum criteria:

- The option should allow the AKM to remain above the overfished and overfishing thresholds over a period of 15 years or more.
- The option should result in the least impact to both recreational and commercial.
- The option should prevent seasonal closures and avoid area closures.

B.2. The three FishSmart Workgroup proposed consensus AKM management combination options each meet and exceed the three minimum criteria. (*see B.1*) The modeling results and analysis suggest that each may perform differently relative to their overall effects: on the recreational and commercial fishery; on increasing spawning stock biomass; and on fish mortality. As a result, the FishSmart Workgroup decided to recommend these management combination options be considered and evaluated by the Council. The Workgroup did not establish a priority order for the following three combination options:

- 8 million annual total allowable catch, and a 2 fish angler bag limit for the recreational fishery.
- 8 million annual total allowable catch, 2 fish bag limit, and a 28" minimum size limit for the recreational fishery.
- 8 million annual total allowable catch, and a 32" minimum size limit for the recreational fishery.

C. STAKEHOLDER ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recreational anglers have historically contributed to the sustainability and viability of the AKM fishery through their stewardship efforts. The Workgroup recommends the following additional actions be undertaken by the recreational sector:

C.1. Mandatory web-based trip and catch reporting for head boats.

C.2. Mandatory web-based trip and catch reporting for charter boats.

C.3. Encourage voluntary reporting by recreational anglers of catch and effort on a web-based system.

C.4. Mandatory catch reporting for all tournaments.

C.5. Fishing tournaments that include KM should only allow the turning in of 1 KM fish per boat, with the exception of youth, seniors and ladies categories.

D. EDUCATION INITIATIVES RECOMMENDATIONS

D.1. Stakeholders and managers should support the development of a consistent message developed by stakeholder perspectives, which will result in increased angler recruitment and a broader understanding of both benefits and challenges for the fishery.

D.2. Simplifying, and unifying where possible, the enforceable regulatory structure designed with educated user input will result in greater compliance and lead to a more sustainable fishery.