

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners  
**From:** Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management  
**Date:** February 20, 2019  
**Subject:** Consent Agenda: Federal Consistency – Atlantic King Mackerel Commercial Vessel Limits

---

**Purpose:**

Obtain approval to amend Rule 68B-30.003 Florida Administrative Code to be consistent with pending changes to federal commercial vessel limits for king mackerel harvesters in Atlantic federal waters.

**Summary:**

The commercial king mackerel fishery is managed through a complex series of seasons, vessel limits, and quotas that vary regionally and throughout the year. Many of these regulations are based on seasonal and geographical variations in fish availability, fishing practices, and market demand. This fishery occurs in both state and federal waters, and FWC rules for commercial king mackerel harvest mirror regulations for adjacent federal waters.

In October 2018, the South Atlantic Council (Council) approved increased federal vessel limits for commercial Atlantic king mackerel fishing following requests from east Florida commercial fishermen and recommendations from the Council's Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel. The new limits are pending approval by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce. Once implemented, these changes will balance the need for vessel limits that are large enough to make commercial fishing economically feasible with the desire for continuous access to king mackerel during the months of March through September.

The proposed federal consistency action would update the reference to federal commercial vessel limits in FWC's Atlantic king mackerel rule to refer to the new federal vessel limits once they are approved by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce. This would ensure state and federal vessel limits continue to be consistent and reduce confusion about commercial vessel limits in state waters.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Approve the change to the state's Atlantic king mackerel commercial vessel limits to be consistent with pending federal rules. If approved, staff will follow the process for adoption of federal standards as provided by section 120.53(6) Florida Statutes.

**Staff Contact and/or Presenter:**

Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management