

in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the Florida west coast sub-zone. This closure is necessary to protect the overfished Gulf king mackerel resource.

EFFECTIVE DATE: February 22, 1995, through June 30, 1995.

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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 by regulations at 50 CFR part 642 under the authority of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Catch limits recommended by the Councils and implemented by NMFS for the Gulf of Mexico migratory group of king mackerel set the commercial quota of king mackerel in the Florida west coast sub-zone at 865,000 lb (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 fishing with run-around gillnets and those using hook-and-line gear. The quota for vessels using hook-and-line gear was reached and the commercial fishery for vessels using such gear was closed December 20, 1994 (59 FR 66276, December 23, 1994). On February 1, 1995, the fishery was reopened by an emergency interim rule (60 FR 7134, February 7, 1995) that revised the 1994-95 fishing year commercial quota to 732,500 lb (332,256 kg) for vessels using hook-and-line gear and imposed a daily possession/landing

limit of 125 king mackerel for such vessels.

Under the provisions of the emergency interim rule (50 CFR 642.32(c)), NMFS is required to close the commercial fishery for king mackerel for vessels using hook-and-line gear in the Florida west coast sub-zone when the revised quota is reached, or is projected to be reached, by publishing notification in the Federal Register. NMFS has determined that the revised commercial quota of 732,500 lb (332,256 kg) for Gulf group king mackerel for vessels using hook-and-line gear in the Florida west coast sub-zone was reached on February 21, 1995. Hence, the commercial fishery for king mackerel for such vessels in the Florida west coast sub-zone is closed effective 12:01 a.m., local time, February 22, 1995, through June 30, 1995, the end of the fishing year.

The Florida west coast sub-zone extends from the Alabama/Florida boundary (87°31'06" W. long.) to (1) the Dade/Monroe County, Florida boundary (25°20.4' N. lat.) from November 1 through March 31; and (2) the Monroe/Collier County, Florida boundary (25°48' N. lat.) from April 1 through October 31.

NMFS previously determined that the commercial quota of king mackerel from the western zone of the Gulf of Mexico was reached and closed that segment of the fishery on September 24, 1994 (59 FR 49356, September 28, 1994). Subsequently, NMFS determined that the commercial quota of king mackerel for vessels using run-around gillnets in the Florida west coast sub-zone of the eastern zone of the Gulf of Mexico was reached and closed that segment of the fishery on February 3, 1995 (60 FR 7716, February 9, 1995). Thus, with this closure, all commercial fisheries for

king mackerel in the EEZ are closed from the U.S./Mexico border through the Florida west coast sub-zone through June 30, 1995.

Except for a person aboard a charter vessel, during the closure, no person aboard a vessel permitted to fish under a commercial allocation may fish for, retain, or have in possession in the EEZ Gulf group king mackerel from the closed zones. A person aboard a charter vessel may continue to fish for king mackerel in the closed zones under the bag limit set forth in § 642.24(a)(1)(i), provided the vessel is under charter and the vessel has an annual charter vessel permit, as specified in § 642.4(a)(2). A charter vessel with a permit to fish on a commercial allocation is under charter when it carries a passenger who fishes for a fee or when there are more than three persons aboard, including operator and crew.

During the closure, king mackerel from the closed zones taken in the EEZ, including those harvested under the bag limit, may not be purchased, bartered, traded, or sold. This prohibition does not apply to trade in king mackerel from the closed zones that were harvested, landed, and bartered, traded, or sold prior to the closure and held in cold storage by a dealer or processor.

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 642.32(c) and is exempt from under E.O. 12866.

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

Dated: February 21, 1995.

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Acting Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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