

>Dear Ms. Iverson,

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>I am writing out of concern about the news of a possible closure of the

>Cobia season due to an increase in the catch the past couple of years.

>I have been recreationally fishing for Cobia fairly regularly the past

>4 years and would agree that there has been more fishing pressure on Cobia.

> However, I am very concerned about the accuracy of the data being used

>to base the decision on.

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>The 862,000 lbs. estimate of the Virginia catch is a large outlier and

>hardly seems plausible. Our VA season is approximately 120 days long

>with optimistically 70-80 of those days fishable, weather permitting.

>I will generally fish about once a week from April-Oct, on some of the

>nicest days, launching my boat from the Crab Creek ramp in Virginia

>Beach and have never encountered a fishery's rep of any kind doing a survey.

>My back of the envelope calculations indicate that the surveyors are

>estimating VA angler's harvest exploded to 300-400 fish every fishable

>day. From my experience, I find it very hard to believe that there are

>that many boats fishing and having that kind of success everyday with a

>one fish per person limit in VA.

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>I agree that the Cobia catch has been increasing the past several years

>as more anglers are targeting this popular species and steps should be

>taken to limit the harvest. Particularly in states like NC, which

>allows two fish per angler but I would also support limits of one fish

>per angler per day with a boat limit of 3 fish per day in VA. I think

>that a drastic measure such as closure of the fishery based on the

>questionable catch data I have seen is premature and should be reconsidered.

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>I look forward to learning more about the council's review of the Cobia

>fishery as well as other species and hope that they are able to

>determine a proper course of action and successfully maintain a healthy

>balance of our marine resources for the benefit of all.

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>Sincerely,

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>Mike Wills, 24 Year Saltwater Recreational Angler Virginia Beach, VA