

According to the results of the overfished and overfishing is n mortality to a level below the the catch in 2015 indicates a s coastal spawning population t

A draft of the addendum will b contact Max Appelman, Fisher 703.842.0740.

Excerpt from the ASMFC Meeting Summary Jan/Feb 2017.
South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board summary report below (at the highlight)
Full meeting summary available at <http://www.asmf.org/files/Meetings/2017WinterMeeting/2017WinterMeetingSummary.pdf>

Motions

Main Motion

Move to initiate an addendum to the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan that considers a relaxation of the coastwide commercial and recreational regulations to bring fishing mortality to the target based on the 2016 stock assessment update.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. O'Reilly.

Motion to Postpone

Motion to postpone until the May meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Train and seconded by Mr. White. Motion fails (Roll Call Vote: In Favor – ME, NH, MA, RI, PA, USFWS, NMFS; Opposed – CT, NJ, DE, MD, DC, PRFC, VA, NC; Null – NY).

Main Motion

Move to initiate an addendum to the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan that considers a relaxation of the coastwide commercial and recreational regulations to bring fishing mortality to the target based on the 2016 stock assessment update.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. O'Reilly. Motion passes (Roll Call Vote: In Favor – CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, DC, PRFC, VA; Opposed – ME, NH, MA, RI, PA, USFWS, NMFS; Null – NC).

SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 2, 2017)

Meeting Summary

Cobia PID

The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board met to review public comment on the Public Information Document (PID) for the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Cobia and review the Red Drum Stock Assessment and Peer Review Reports.

Five public hearings were held throughout the Southeast during December 2016. Public hearings were attended by 60 non-staff participants and 16 written comments were submitted. Two issues that notably dominated concerns expressed about cobia management were the characterization of the recreational fishery by landings estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) and the Atlantic Migratory Group (AMG) cobia stock definition (Georgia north).

The public expressed mixed opinions on a complementary management plan between the Commission and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC), with supporters of complementary management focusing on the flexibility of state management through the Commission and detractors focusing on disagreement in the management unit and inability of the Commission to change allowable catch limits (ACL). The public expressed that objectives and goals of the management plan should include: long-term sustainability of the stock, state flexibility, prioritizing the recreational fishery, improved data collection, and a long-term management regime that would strive to avoid closures and make management changes, when necessary, in a fashion that would provide stakeholders an opportunity to plan for such changes. There was general supported state-by-state allocation options. The public expressed support for size and bag limits for the recreational fishery, definition of state *de minimis* qualifications, and maintenance of commercial bycatch provisions.

The South Atlantic Species Advisory Panel (AP) expressed support for development of a complementary FMP between the Commission and SAFMC. The AP provided similar comments to those of the public with respect to long-term management objectives that would avoid annual mid-season changes or closures. The AP also supported the development of biological sampling requirements to improve data collection.

The Board discussed public comments on the issues presented in the PID. Much of the discussion focused on a need for “equitable access” to the fishery. The Board expressed support of fishery independent monitoring requirements and *de minimis* qualifications being included in the Draft FMP. A work group was populated to address allocation options for the Draft FMP.

The Board directed staff to move forward with the development of a complementary fishery management plan for AMG cobia. The Board requested analyses that include examination of size and bag limits, various state-by-state allocation scenarios, seasons, and other measures aimed at managing the fishery within the ACLs established by the SAFMC.

Red Drum Stock Assessment & Peer Review

The Board also reviewed the 2017 Red Drum Stock Assessment and Peer Review Reports and approved them for management use. The reports indicate overfishing is not occurring for red drum in either the northern (North Carolina-New Jersey) or southern (South Carolina-Florida) stocks. The assessment estimates annual static spawning potential ratios (sSPR) measured against previously established sSPR reference points for red drum. Overfishing is occurring if the three-year average sSPR is less than a threshold of 30%, with a management target of 40% sSPR. sSPR is a measure of spawning stock biomass survival rates when fished at the current years fishing mortality rate relative to the spawning stock biomass survival rates if no fishing mortality was occurring. In the assessment’s terminal year of 2013, the three-year (2011-2013) average sSPR was 43.8% for the northern stock and 53.5% for the southern stock, both above the target and threshold values. The assessment was unable to determine an overfished/not overfished status because population abundance or biomass could not be reliably estimated due to limited available data for the older fish (ages 4+) that are not typically harvested due to the current fishery measures (the slot-limits).

Commercial harvests occur only from the northern stock with landings showing considerable fluctuation throughout the catch time series, and peaking in 1999 and 2013. Most of the commercial landings are caught using gill nets and beach seines, with North Carolina typically contributing over 90% of annual commercial landings.

The recreational fishery contributes the majority of total harvest for both stocks, in part because states in the southern portion of the fishery reserve red drum harvest strictly for recreational anglers. Recreational harvest of the northern stock has fluctuated throughout the time series from 1989-2013, with a large increase in harvest in 2013 and the majority of harvest occurring in North Carolina. Recreational discards from the northern stock have also fluctuated throughout the time series, though not always in conjunction with recreational harvest. An 8% mortality rate is assumed for recreational discards in both stocks.

Recreational harvest of the southern stock has shown a general increase throughout the time series with the majority of harvest occurring in Florida. Recreational discards from the southern stock generally increased throughout the time series, following similar fluctuations as recreational harvest.

The Board accepted the stock assessment and peer review report for management use. No management action was taken because reference points for red drum have already been established and overfishing is not occurring. A press release on the assessment results will be released on February 6.

Lastly, the Board accepted the 2016 Spot FMP Review and state compliance reports and approved Georgia's request for *de minimis*.

Please contact Dr. Louis Daniel at ldaniel@asmfc.org for information on cobia management and Mike Schmidtke, mschmidtke@asmfc.org for more information on the all other South Atlantic species.

Motions

Move to approve Deb Lambert to the Cobia Plan Development Team.

Motion made by Dr. McGovern and seconded by Dr. Laney. Motion passes without objection.

Motion to Postpone

Main Motion

Motion to postpone the approval of the stock assessment and peer review for management advice until the following tasks can be completed by the Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee:

- Evaluate if current biological reference point types and values are appropriate for red drum given the specie's life history
- Investigate the feasibility of an F-based reference point for juvenile red drum
- Evaluate how red drum life history and fishery management measures affect the validity of age-based models
- Evaluate whether the South region continuity run of the statistical catch and age model can be made informative for management and, if yes, complete a continuity run
- Evaluate if a North region continuity run of the statistical catch at age model would be informative for management purposes and, if yes, complete a continuity run

- **Evaluate tag return rates for each region and determine if tag return data should be incorporated into a new run of the SS3 model**

Motion made by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Ms. Fegley.

Motion to Substitute

Move to substitute to accept the Red Drum Stock Assessment as presented today for management use.

Motion made by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion carries without objection.

Main Motion as Substituted

Move to accept the Red Drum Stock Assessment as presented today for management use.

Motion carries without objection.

Move to approve the 2016 Fishery Management Plan Review for Spot and approve *de minimis* status for Georgia.

Motion made by Mr. O'Reilly and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion passes without objection.