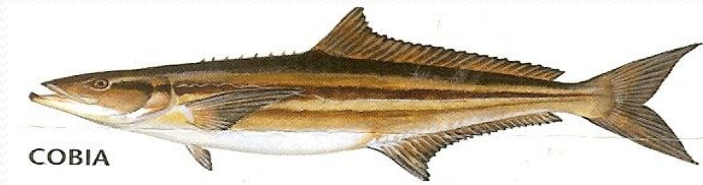




Overview

Atlantic (GA-NY) Cobia



South Atlantic Mackerel Cobia AP and Cobia Sub-Panel

April 19-20, 2017

N Charleston, SC

Gulf and Atlantic Cobia

- Joint fishery management plan (FMP) for coastal migratory pelagics (CMP) in the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic region, implemented in 1982
- Gulf Council manages Gulf cobia,
- South Atlantic Council manages Atlantic cobia + Florida east coast
- The stock boundary is at the GA/FL line.



Stock Boundary

- Boundary between Gulf and Atlantic stocks is at the Georgia/Florida line
- SEDAR 28 (2012) stock boundary
 - Based on microsatellite DNA and supported by tag-recapture data
- Amendment 20B (2015) revised stock boundary to be at the Georgia/Florida line to align management boundary with the SEDAR 28 boundary



Annual Catch Limits

- Implemented through Amendment 20B on March 1, 2015
- Atlantic Cobia (GA-NY):
 - Stock ACL = 670,000 lbs for 2016 and subsequent years
 - Recreational (92%) = 620,000 lbs
 - Commercial (8%) = 50,000 lbs
- Gulf Cobia:
 - Stock ACL = 2.59 mp
 - Gulf Zone ACL = 1.66 mp
 - Florida East Coast Zone ACL = 930,000 lbs
 - Recreational (92%) = 860,000 lbs
 - Commercial (8%) = 50,000 lbs

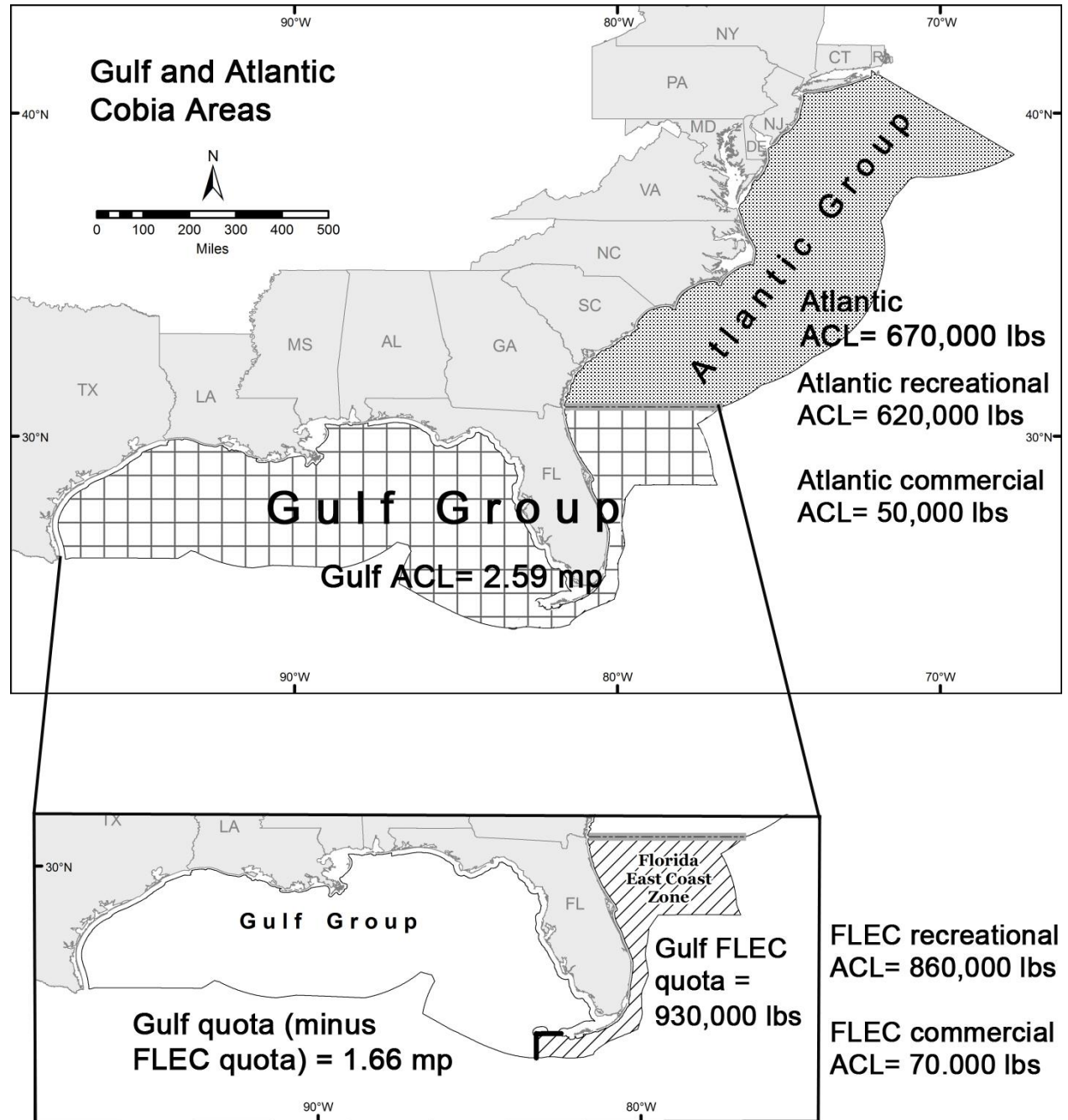


The Gulf and Atlantic groups are designated as **two different stocks**.

Each stock has its own **annual catch limit**, which is based on recommendations from each Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee.

The annual catch limit applies only to **cofia caught within each stock's boundaries**.

The quotas cannot be moved between the two stocks.



Accountability Measures

- **Accountability measures** are required to prevent catch from exceeding the annual catch limits and to mitigate overages. This helps to stop/slow overfishing, and prevent a stock from becoming overfished.
- Current AMs were implemented in Amendment 18 on January 30, 2012
- Commercial AMs
 - In-season closure if commercial landings reach (or are projected to reach) the commercial ACL.
 - If landings exceed the ACL and Atlantic cobia are designated as overfished, next year's commercial ACL will be reduced by amount of overage.
- Recreational AMs
 - If rec ACL and stock ACL are exceeded, the next year's recreational season will be shortened so that landings reach the annual catch target but not exceed the rec ACL.
 - If landings exceed the ACL and Atlantic cobia are designated as overfished, next year's rec ACL will be reduced.
 - Recreational landings evaluated as average of the most recent 3 years.

Accountability Measures

- Proposed changes to Recreational AMs for Atlantic cobia only (Framework Amendment 4)
 - If rec ACL and stock ACL are exceeded, the next year's vessel limit will be reduced to no lower than 2/vessel. If this is not sufficient to keep landings from exceeding the ACL and to mitigate the overage, NMFS will also reduce the next year's season length so that landings reach the annual catch target but not exceed the rec ACL.
 - Recreational landings evaluated using only that year's landings (remove the 3-year moving average for evaluation).
 - A 3-year moving average was intended to capture the dynamics of the fishery. However, the Council decided that the 3-year moving average would be more likely to penalize fishermen because one year of high landings would be included in the evaluation for the next 3 years.
 - This will stay in place: If landings exceed the ACL and Atlantic cobia are designated as overfished, next year's rec ACL will be reduced.

Proposed rule for Framework Amendment 4 published on 2/21/17.

Expected implementation TBD, due to regulatory freeze in place.



Atlantic Cobia

- Current management measures in the EEZ:
 - 2/person possession limit (comm and rec)
 - 33" inches fork length (FL) minimum size
 - must be landed intact
 - commercial cobia from EEZ must be sold to federal dealer
- Proposed measures (Framework Amendment 4):
 - Rec limit: 1/person and no more than 6/vessel
 - Comm limit: 2/person and no more than 6/vessel
 - 36" inches FL minimum size for recreational
 - Also revised recreational AMs
 - Proposed rule published 2/21/17, comment period closes 3/23/17.
http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishery_bulletins/2017/012/index.html
 - Regulatory freeze may delay implementation of final rule



2016 and 2017 Fishing Seasons

- 2015 recreational Annual Catch Limit = 630,000 lbs
- 2015 recreational landings = 1,554,394 lbs
- Triggered the Accountability Measure, so the 2016 fishing season closed on June 20, 2016, for federal waters

- 2016 recreational Annual Catch Limit = 620,000 lbs
- 2016 recreational landings = 1,346,193 lbs
- Triggered the Accountability Measure, so the 2017 fishing season closed on January 23, 2017, for federal waters
- NMFS had to assume that some states would keep state waters open, which would contribute to 2017 landings reaching the Annual Catch Limit



2017 –Regulations for State Waters

Virginia - March 28, 2017 VMRC meeting

- 1/person and 3/vessel, whichever is more restrictive
- Minimum size 40” TL, and only one fish over 50” TL per boat
- Season is June 1- September 15
- No gaffing
- Mandatory reporting

North Carolina - Feb 15-16, 2017 NC Marine Fisheries Commission

- 1/person and 4/ vessel
- Minimum size 36” FL
- Season is May 1- August 31
- All cobia harvested shall be recorded and tagged at a current or future NC Citation Station location

South Carolina

- Recreational harvest of cobia closed for state waters January 23, 2017

Georgia

- Recreational harvest of cobia is open for state waters, but most harvest comes from federal waters



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

- The South Atlantic Council requested that the ASMFC consider a complementary management plan for cobia.
- ASMFC held meetings to get public input for an interstate plan in late 2016.
- ASMFC will meet in May 2017 and review the draft interstate plan that will be posted for public comment



