

**Recreational Atlantic Cobia  
Public Input Summary  
(Comments received from March 4 through May 20, 2016)**

This summary includes comments received in regards to recreational Atlantic cobia via email and at the public Q&A meeting/webinar on May 9, 2016. **Attachment 5b** includes written correspondence, including letters from individuals, recreational organizations, U.S. Representative Walter Jones (NC) and U.S. Representative Robert Wittman (VA). **Attachment 5c** is the audio from the public Q&A meeting on May 9, 2016, which had 50 people in attendance in-person, and webinar participation of 49 individuals. **Attachment 5d** includes that question log from the webinar component of the Q&A meeting.

Overall:

- Most commenters are opposed to the recreational closure. It will have negative economic and social impacts on recreational fishermen, including for-hire fishing businesses and specifically for fishermen in North Carolina and Virginia.
- Some commenters recommended that the Council request an emergency rule to remove the closure date because of the negative economic impacts, and because of concerns about the data used to determine the overage.
- The closure will restrict the time (if any) that Virginia and North Carolina will have to fish for cobia, and it is unfair that the other states will have more access to cobia before the closure.
- The shore-based recreational component should be exempt from the closure.
- There should have been management measures in place to prevent the overage.
- There is concern about the recreational landings data used to determine that landings exceeded the ACL.
- The ACL does not reflect the current (healthy) status of the fishery.
- There is also concern about the data used in SEDAR 28 that determined the stock boundary at the GA/FL line.
- A new stock assessment for cobia is needed.
- Recreational data collection should be improved.
- It is unfair that the Florida east coast has a larger ACL than for Atlantic cobia (GA-NY).
- There should be a representative from Virginia on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.
- There should be more opportunities for fishermen to participate and provide input (more in-person meetings, online forum, etc).

Input on Management Measures for Atlantic Cobia

- Implement a captain/crew exclusion on the cobia bag limit
- Vessel limit of 6 fish/ 3 fish/ 2 fish/ 1 fish (several comments addressed vessel limits)
- Vessel limits for charter and private recreational should be the same.
- 1 fish per day bag limit
- Implement a tag program, with each angler receiving 2 tags per year
- Increase tagging studies for tracking migration and mortality
- Close the recreational cobia for a few years.
- Increase the minimum size limit
- Increase the minimum size limit incrementally during the year

- Limit the number of cobia over a certain size that can be kept, per vessel.
- Define seasons for each state.
- State by state quotas for cobia.
- Closures on a rolling basis to reflect the migration of cobia.
- Closure during the early spawning season.
- Require netting of smaller cobia.
- Restrict gaffing to only larger fish.
- ACL calculated based on landings from 2015-2018
- Use a minimum of a 3-year average in an annual average ACL overage should be utilized to initiate a shortened season/closure.
- The AM should be modified so that the reduced season length will not have more negative effects on one area/state than on the other states.
- Improve data collection for data used in evaluating an overage.