



Mackerel Committee
 March 2016
 Potential Actions for Recreational Atlantic Cobia

Background

In December 2015, the Mackerel Committee was notified that recreational landings for Atlantic cobia were at 241% of the recreational ACL through the end of August, based on MRIP estimates. The landings through Wave 5 (end of October) were at 245% of the recreational ACL. The accountability measure for Atlantic cobia was established in Amendment 18 is that the Regional Administrator will publish a notice to shorten the subsequent season.

Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia Management

Stock boundaries: Georgia/Florida state line through the Mid-Atlantic region

Annual Catch Limits:

	2015	2016 and subsequent years
Total ACL	690,000 lbs ww	670,000 lbs ww
Commercial ACL (8%)	60,000 lbs ww	50,000 lbs ww
Recreational ACL (92%)	630,000 lbs ww	620,000 lbs ww
Recreational ACT	520,000 lbs ww	500,000 lbs ww

Recreational Accountability Measure: If the Total ACL is exceeded, the RA shall publish a notice to reduce the length of the following fishing year by the amount necessary to ensure landings meet the ACT but do not exceed the recreational sector quota for the following fishing year. The RA may also make further adjustments to the fishing year following an ACL overage during the next fishing year. If overfished the ACL and ACT for the following season will also be reduced. Recreational landings will be evaluated relative to the ACL based on a moving multi-year average of landings, as described in the FMP.

Recreational Management Measures:

- Minimum size limit – 33 inches fork length
 - Virginia state waters- 37 inches fork length
- Bag limit – 2 fish/person/day
 - Florida state waters - 1 fish/person or 6/vessel, whichever is less
 - Virginia state waters – 1 fish/person

Note: Federal commercial possession limit is 2 fish; no federal commercial permit requirement

Possible Framework Actions

- Reduce bag limit
- Establish a vessel limit
- Increase the minimum size limit
- Change the start of the fishing year
- Closure or management measures during spawning (May-June)
- Rolling seasonal closures by state/area
- Others?

Possible Plan Amendment Actions

- State-by-state quotas
- Prohibit retention by for-hire captain and crew
- Others?

Potential Timeline for Framework Amendment

March 2016- direct staff on actions and alternatives for the framework

April/May 2016- document development, analysis

June 2016- Council reviews, selects preferred alternatives, and takes final action [hearing held during Council meeting]

June/July 2016- submit amendment to NMFS

Implementation by December 2016

Potential [very optimistic] Timeline for Plan Amendment

March 2016- direct staff on actions and alternatives

April 2016- Scoping; Gulf Council reviews and approves actions/alternatives

April/May 2016- document development, analysis

June 2016- Councils review and modify, approve for public hearings

August 2016- Public hearings

September 2016- South Atlantic Council reviews and takes final action

October 2016- Gulf Council reviews and takes final action; amendment submitted to NMFS

Implementation in late spring/summer 2017

COMMITTEE ACTIONS:

OPTION 1: Direct staff to develop a framework amendment with the following actions and alternatives, for approval at the June 2016 SAFMC meeting.

[Insert actions/alternatives]

OPTION 2: Direct staff to develop a plan amendment with the following actions and alternatives.

[Insert actions/alternatives]

OPTION 3: Others?