

Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel and Cobia Sub-Panel Cobia Fishery Performance Report April 2017

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (AP) and the Cobia Sub-Panel are being asked to provide information to develop a fishery performance report (FPR) for cobia harvested on the Florida east coast through the Mid-Atlantic region. The purpose of the FPR is to assemble information from AP members' experience and observations on the water and in the marketplace to complement scientific and landings data. The FPR format is based on the Mid-Atlantic Council's FPRs (available here: <http://www.mafmc.org/fishery-performance-reports/>).

The FPR for cobia will have one section focused on Atlantic (GA-NY) cobia, and the other section focused on Florida east coast cobia, which is considered to be part of the Gulf of Mexico stock. This will be the first FPR for coastal migratory pelagics and will be provided to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and the Socio-Economic Panel (SEP). The format of future FPRs may change based on input from the AP, SSC, SEP, and the South Atlantic Council.

Fishery Overview

Based on data through 2011, the SEDAR 28 (2013) stock assessment concluded that Atlantic cobia and Gulf cobia were not overfished (SSB>MSST) and overfishing was not occurring (F>MFMT). SEDAR 28 also incorporated genetic and tagging data, and the stock boundary was set at the Georgia/Florida line. The Councils modified the stock boundary and updated the annual catch limits for Atlantic (GA-NY) cobia and Florida east coast cobia through CMP Amendment 20B. The changes were implemented in March 2015.

In 2015 and 2016, Atlantic cobia landings exceeded the ACL and the overfishing level (OFL) recommended by the SSC after SEDAR 28. As defined by the Council, landings > OFL indicate that overfishing occurred in 2015 and 2016. NMFS reduced the recreational season length of Atlantic cobia in 2016 and 2017. Additional detailed information about Atlantic cobia is available in [Attachment 2](#) in the AP/Sub-Panel briefing book.

To inform management decisions for cobia, the AP/Sub-Panel is asked to provide input on:

- Trends in catch levels and any recent changes
- Markets and economic information
- Appropriateness of existing management measures
- Observations on environmental/ecological factors
- Other observations

The following general information on commercial and recreational landings trends and economics is being provided to elicit discussion and assist the AP/Sub-Panel in providing information to answer the specific questions that follow.

Atlantic Cobia- Recreational

Table 1 and **Figure 1** show recreational landings estimates of Atlantic cobia provided by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), including MRIP estimates and headboat data. **Figure 2** shows the seasonality across the region through recreational landings by state by wave.

Table 1. Recreational landings of Atlantic cobia by state 2004-2016 (2016 landings are preliminary), including MRIP estimates and headboat data. Data source: SEFSC, March 2017

Year	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC	SC	GA	TOTAL
2004	0	0	0	39,341	333,899	606,540	60,547	1,040,327
2005	0	1,480	0	595,644	320,267	3,788	1,353	922,532
2006	27,863	0	0	757,638	102,253	99,012	2,818	989,584
2007	0	0	0	332,239	88,190	266,670	62,701	749,800
2008	0	0	0	171,816	64,250	48,100	255,682	539,848
2009	0	0	0	570,491	121,052	74,220	1,988	767,751
2010	0	0	1,287	239,153	559,476	63,678	77,845	941,439
2011	0	0	0	139,622	119,678	1,554	88,364	349,218
2012	69,655	0	0	35,614	66,645	222,353	103,180	497,448
2013	0	0	0	363,865	492,998	19,159	29,304	905,327
2014	0	0	0	219,993	277,846	32,010	20,670	550,519
2015	0	0	0	717,676	642,906	125,365	68,448	1,554,394
2016	0	0	1,762	935,997	330,809	77,402	223	1,346,193

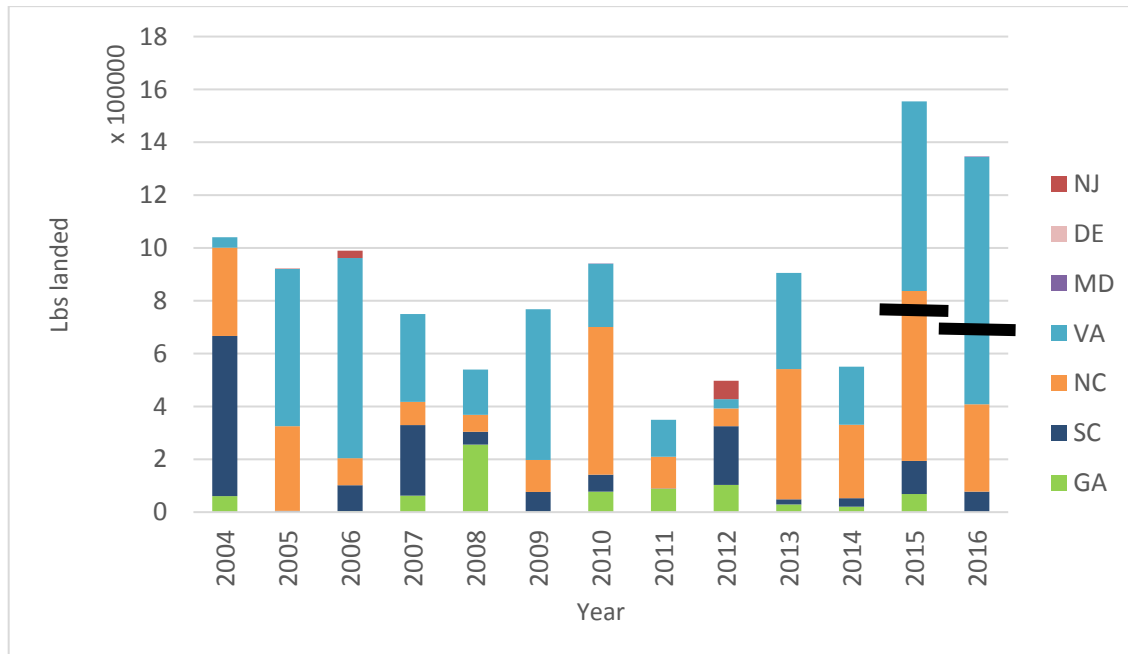


Figure 1. Recreational landings of Atlantic cobia by state 2004-2016 (2016 landings are preliminary), including MRIP estimates and headboat data. Data source: SEFSC, March 2017. The black bars in 2015 and 2016 represent the stock ACLs for Atlantic cobia.

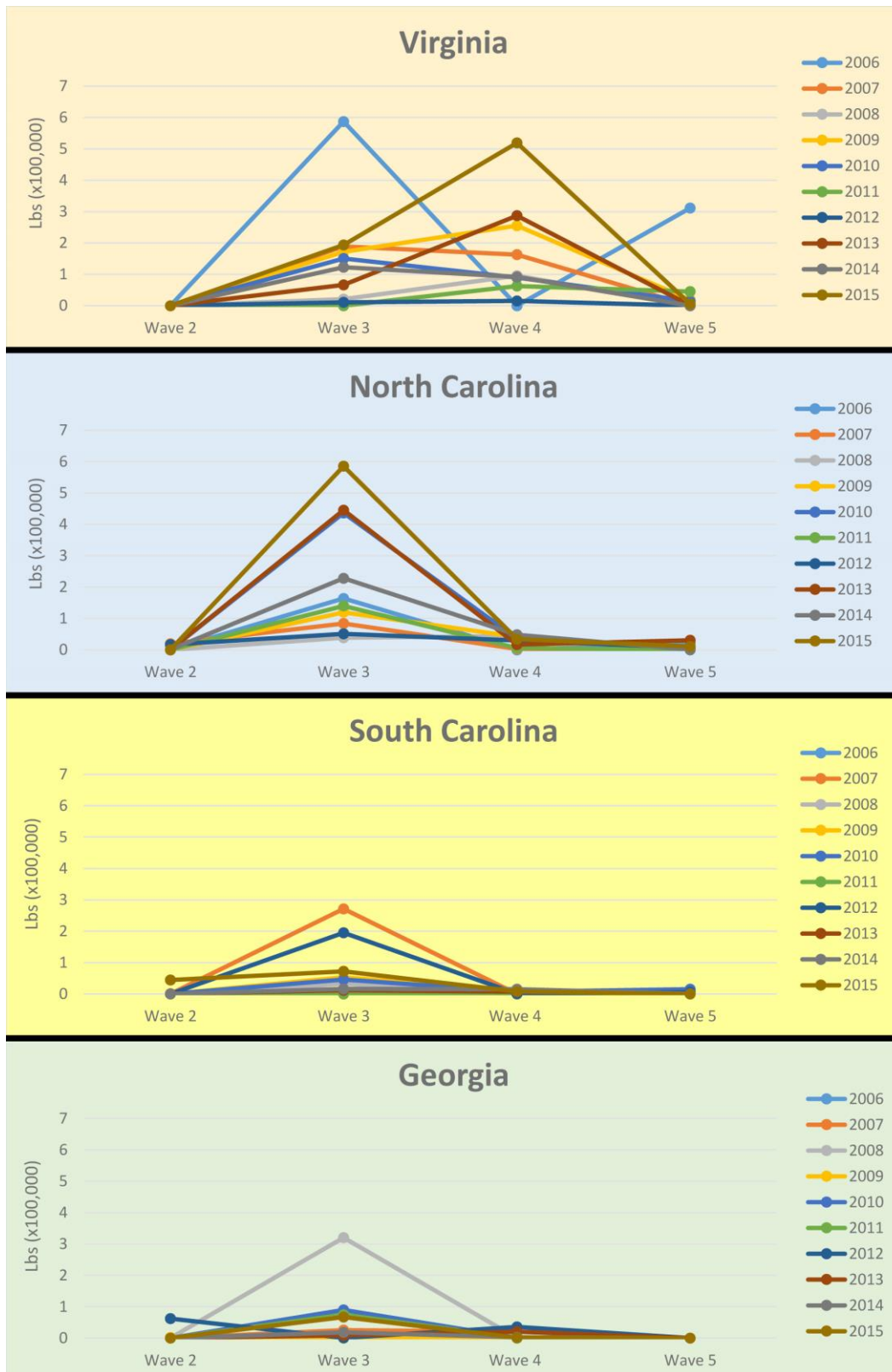


Figure 2. Recreational catch of Atlantic cobia (lbs ww) by wave from 2006-2015 for Waves 2-5. Data sources: SERO and MRIP database. The MRIP-estimated recreational landings of Atlantic cobia in states north of Virginia from 2006-2015 are minimal, with only small numbers reported in Delaware and New Jersey every few years. Additionally, MRIP estimates for 2016 (preliminary) show landings from Maryland.

Atlantic Cobia – Commercial

Table 3 shows landings of Atlantic cobia that were sold and revenue 2010-2015. **Figure 3** shows price per pound in actual (not adjusted for inflation) dollars by state for Atlantic from 2006 through 2015. The figure also shows the average price per pound for all three states in actual (not adjusted) dollars and adjusted dollars.

Table 3. Commercial Atlantic cobia landings (lb ww) and revenues (2014\$) by gear, 2010-2015.

	Hook and Line	Gillnets	Others	Total
Pounds (ww)				
2010	26,758	23,495	6,022	56,275
2011	18,322	9,177	6,294	33,793
2012	12,962	21,091	7,906	41,959
2013	28,356	13,343	10,933	52,632
2014	37,082	23,540	8,517	69,139
2015	37,702	36,417	9,030	83,148
Average	26,864	21,177	8,117	56,158
Dockside Revenues (2014 \$)				
2010	\$49,095	\$38,605	\$14,030	\$101,730
2011	\$39,265	\$18,242	\$21,717	\$79,224
2012	\$29,677	\$43,875	\$23,486	\$97,038
2013	\$69,433	\$30,206	\$31,189	\$130,828
2014	\$99,959	\$55,275	\$21,520	\$176,754
2015	\$108,165	\$100,130	\$25,377	\$233,672
Average	\$65,932	\$47,722	\$22,886	\$136,541

“Hook and line” includes Handline, longline, power assisted line, and troll line; “others” include traps, dredges/gigs/spears, other net gear, and unclassified gear. Source: SEFSC Commercial ACL Dataset (December 2015) for 2010-2014 data; D. Gloeckner (pers. comm., 2016) for 2015 data.

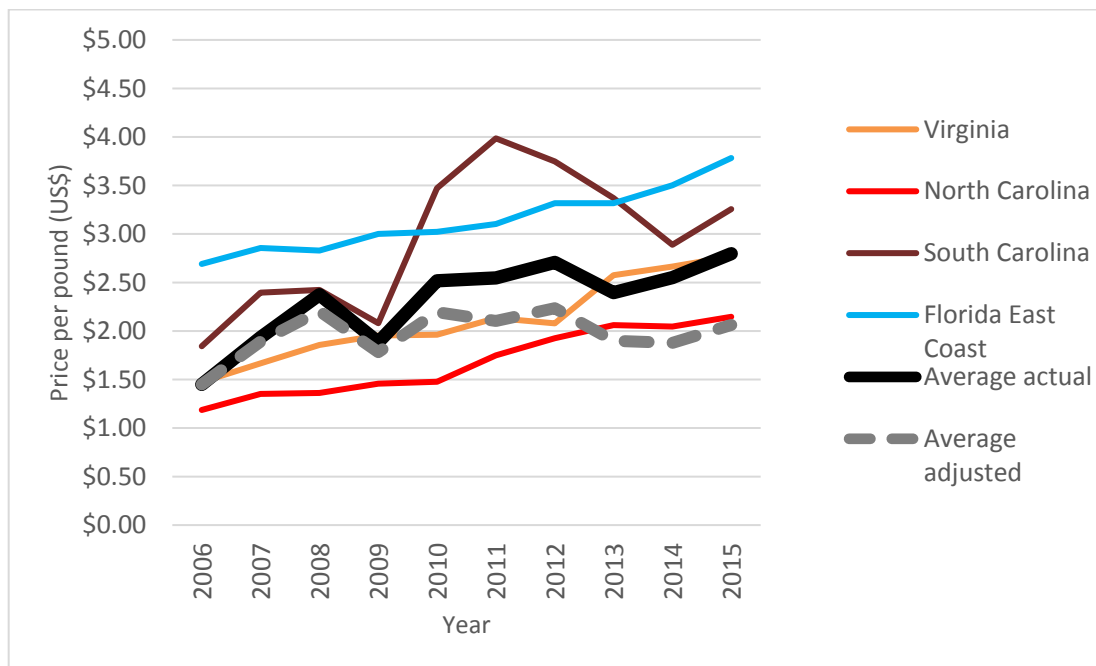


Figure 3. Price per pound (US\$, not adjusted) for Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina for commercial Atlantic cobia, and actual (not adjusted) average price (black line) and adjusted average price (gray dotted line). Source: NMFS Commercial Statistics website.

Florida East Coast Cobia- Recreational

Figure 4 shows recreational landings estimates of Florida east coast cobia provided by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), including MRIP estimates and headboat data.

Figure 5 shows the seasonality of cobia catch by wave for the Florida east coast.

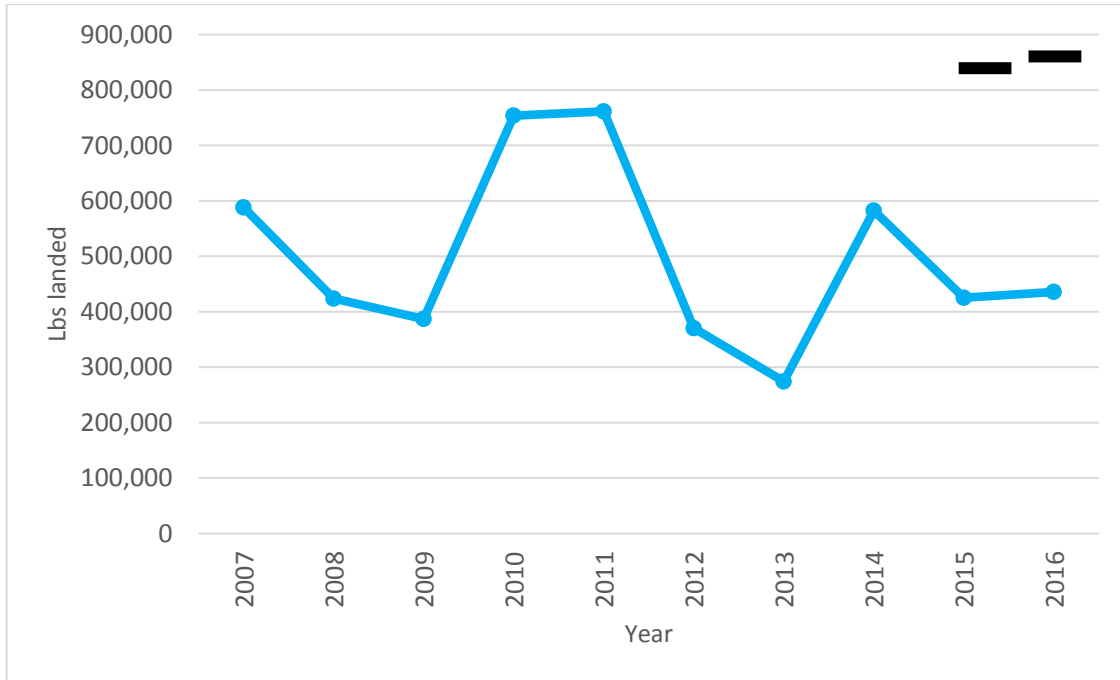


Figure 4. Recreational landings of cobia on the Florida east coast 2007-2016. Data sources: SEDAR 28 and MRIP Data Website. The black bars indicate the 2015 and 2016 recreational ACLs.

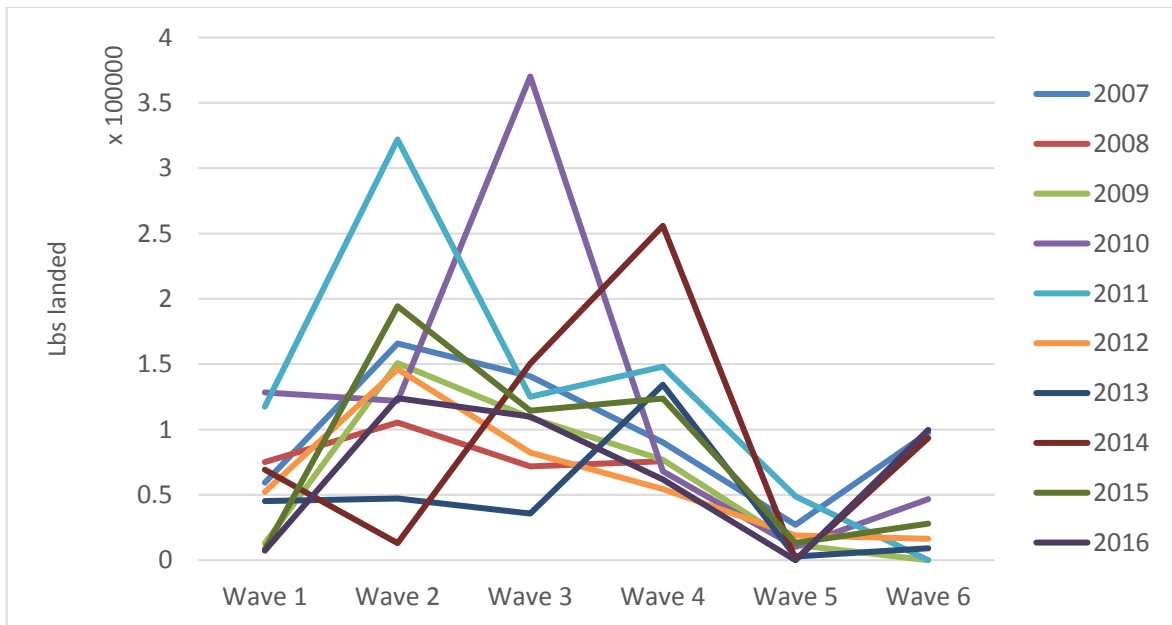


Figure 5. Recreational landings by wave of cobia on the Florida east coast. Data source: MRIP Data Website.

Florida East Coast Cobia – Commercial

Table 3 shows landings of Atlantic cobia that were sold and revenue 2010-2015. **Figure 6** shows price per pound in actual (not adjusted for inflation) dollars by state for Atlantic from 2006 through 2015. The figure also shows the average price per pound for all three states in actual (not adjusted) dollars and adjusted dollars.

Table 3. Commercial cobia landings from the Florida east coast (lb ww) and revenues (actual \$) by gear, 2010-2015.

	Hook and Line	Gillnets	Dive Gear	Other Gear	Total
	Pounds (ww)				
2010	85,786	2,725	6,627	5,912	101,050
2011	136,664	1,846	11,906	5,388	155,804
2012	63,209	2,107	11,771	1,296	78,383
2013	45,997	3,401	9,367	410	59,175
2014	58,603			18,479	77,082
2015	43,801			12,300	56,101
Average	60,597	3,273	8,735	6,034	76,237
	Dockside Revenues (actual \$)				
2010	\$112,787	\$12,534	\$21,263	\$6,829	\$153,413
2011	\$122,947	\$12,151	\$27,297	\$9,247	\$171,642
2012	\$113,582	\$10,491	\$17,450	\$10,813	\$152,336
2013	\$151,263	\$8,726	\$24,579	\$11,843	\$196,411
2014	\$262,387	\$7,411	\$21,110	\$14,542	\$305,450
2015	\$426,745	\$5,180	\$37,663	\$13,910	\$483,498
Average	\$209,776	\$6,619	\$39,442	\$4,275	\$260,112

“Hook and line” includes Handline, longline, power assisted line, and troll line; “others” include traps, dredges/gigs/spears, other net gear, and unclassified gear. Source: NMFS Commercial Statistics.

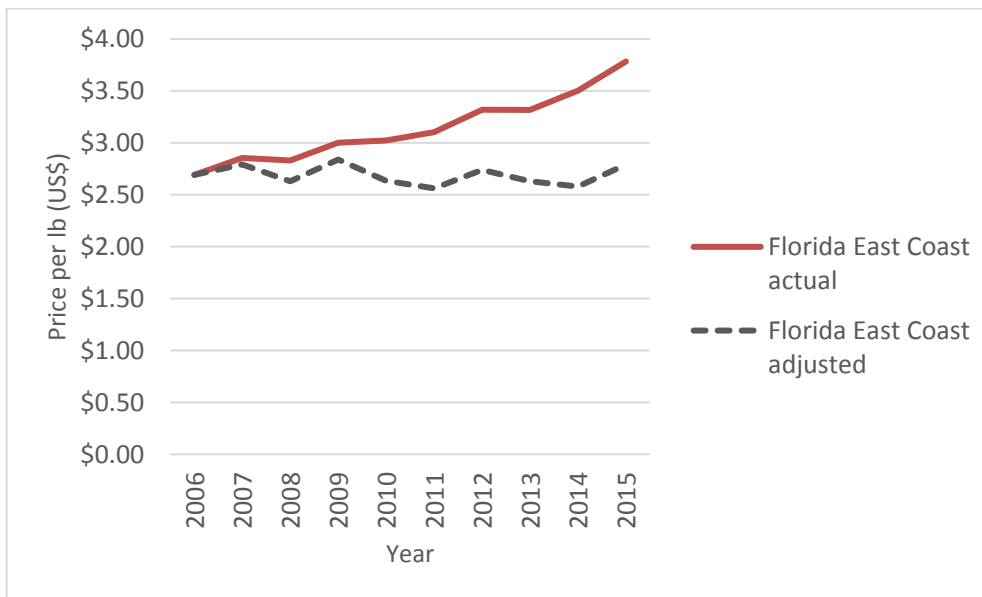


Figure 6. Price per pound (US\$, not adjusted) for commercial cobia from the Florida east coast and adjusted price per pound (gray dotted line).Source: NMFS Commercial Statistics website.

Questions for Advisory Panel and Cobia Sub-Panel:

The AP/Sub-Panel is asked to provide the following information about cobia based on their expertise, as appropriate:

1) Catch levels over the past 5 years:

- For the commercial sector, how has price and demand for cobia changed?
- How has demand for charter/headboat trips targeting cobia changed?
- When/where are the fish available, and has this changed?
- Has the size of the fish changed?
- Have there been effort shifts to/from cobia?

2) Management measures:

- Is the minimum size limit and possession limit for the commercial sector appropriate?
- Is the minimum size limit and possession limit for the recreational sector appropriate?
- Are there new measures that the Council should consider?
- Are there other existing measures that should be changed?

3) Environmental/ecological

- Has there been a shift in cobia abundance/availability due to environmental factors such as mild winter, storms, etc.?
- Are you observing a range of sizes of fish?
- What are your observations concerning the timing and length of the cobia spawning season in your area?

4) Other

- Do you have suggestions for research priorities for cobia?
- What else is important for the Council to know about cobia?