

Overview

Mackerel Cobia Committee

Westin Jekyll Island
110 Ocean Way
Jekyll Island, Georgia

March 8-9, 2017

Following approval of the agenda and the December 2016 minutes, the Mackerel Cobia Committee will begin discussion of cobia, including an (A) update from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) meeting in January/February 2017 followed by a (B) presentation from NMFS on the 2017 recreational season for Atlantic cobia. The state representatives on the Council will also provide (C) updates of state decisions and actions for 2017.

Next, the Committee will be briefed on (D) the status of commercial catches versus the respective ACLs/quotas for Atlantic king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia. SERO staff will also provide (E) a status update on the review of Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP) Amendment 26, Framework Amendment 4, and Framework Amendment 5. Following, the Committee will (F) review and discuss units used in tracking landings of mackerel and cobia (CMP) species.

The Council staff will next (G) review the report and decisions affecting CMP from the Gulf Council meeting in January/February 2017. The Committee will discuss (H) Amendment 29 (Gulf king mackerel allocation sharing and accountability measures). The Committee will consider approval for Secretarial review or to track the recent Gulf Council decision to stop development of Amendment 29.

The Committee will review (I) potential items for the Mackerel Cobia AP meeting in April 2017. Last, the Committee will address issues under (J) Other Business if necessary.

A. ASMFC Public Information Document for Cobia (Attachment 1)

The ASMFC recently held public meetings to collect input on the Public Information Document (PID) for the interstate cobia plan. At the ASMFC meeting held in January/February 2017, the South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board reviewed public input and directed ASMFC staff on items to include in the cobia interstate management plan and analysis/data requests. Bob Beal (ASMFC) will provide an overview of the recent decisions (**Attachment 1** - excerpt from the meeting report that includes only the summary and motions from the South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board) and next steps for the cobia interstate management plan.

The PID and public comments are available here: <http://www.asmfc.org/files/Meetings/2017WinterMeeting/SouthAtlanticStateFederalFisheriesBoard.pdf>

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

B. NMFS SERO Presentation on 2017 Recreational Season for Atlantic Cobia (*Attachment 2*)

Recreational landings of Atlantic cobia in 2016 were 1,336,012 lbs, which exceeded the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) of 620,000 lbs. The recreational accountability measure for Atlantic cobia is that if landings exceed the ACL, the following fishing season will be shortened so that landings can reach the annual catch target (ACT) but not exceed the ACL again. The 2017 recreational fishing year opened on January 1. On January 25, 2017, a notice from NMFS was published in the Federal Register to close recreational harvest of Atlantic cobia effective January 24, 2017 (available here: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/01/25/2017-00785/fisheries-of-the-caribbean-gulf-of-mexico-and-south-atlantic-2017-recreational-accountability>). SERO staff will provide an overview of the process and projections to determine the 2017 recreational season.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

C. State Reports on Cobia Actions for 2017

State agency representatives will provide updates to the Committee on actions and decisions regarding recreational harvest of Atlantic cobia in state waters for 2017.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

D. Status of Landings for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Species (*Attachment 3*)

The Committee will receive status updates on commercial landings for Atlantic king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

E. Status of Amendments Approved for Secretarial Review

- CMP Amendment 26 (king mackerel ACLs, allocations, stock boundary, incidental catch)
– sent for formal review on July 7, 2016
- Framework Amendment 4 (Atlantic cobia management measures)
– sent for formal review on October 28, 2016
- Framework Amendment 5 (modify permit restrictions)
– sent for formal review on December 2, 2016

F. Tracking CMP landings in a common unit

The annual catch limits and quotas listed in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for all CMP species are in round and eviscerated weight combined. Landings are tracked “round and eviscerated weight combined” for all stocks/sectors except for recreational Atlantic king mackerel and recreational Atlantic Spanish mackerel (whole weight). For the Atlantic stocks, overfishing levels (OFLs) and acceptable biological catch (ABCs) are in whole weight. The language in amendments for the most recent ACLs for the Atlantic CMP stocks specify that the ACL is equal to the ABC (in whole weight) but do not explicitly state that the ACL is in whole

weight. CMP stocks are the only managed stocks in the Atlantic and Gulf that are tracked “as reported.” The table below summarizes the units used for each Atlantic stock.

	ACL Tracking ¹	Stock Assessment ²	Amendment Language ³	CFR Language ⁴
Atlantic KM- comm	As reported	OFL/ABC whole weight	ACL= ABC but units for ACL not specified	round and eviscerated weight combined
Atlantic KM- rec	Whole weight			
Atlantic SM- comm	As reported	OFL/ABC whole weight	ACL= ABC but units for ACL not specified	round and eviscerated weight combined
Atlantic SM- rec	Whole weight			
Atlantic Cobia - comm	As reported	OFL/ABC whole weight	ACL= ABC but units for ACL not specified	round and eviscerated weight combined
Atlantic Cobia- rec	As reported			

¹SERO ACL Webpage: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/acl_monitoring/index.html

²SEDAR 38 for king mackerel, SEDAR 28 for Spanish mackerel and cobia

³ Amendment 26 for king mackerel; Framework Amendment 1 for Spanish mackerel; Amendment 20B for cobia

⁴ <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=86d3e4e21c5e4a3cd94b7f259d8700e1&node=50:12.0.1.1.2&rgn=div5v>

Without a common unit for the ACLs/quotas and for tracking landings, the proportion of landings that are whole fish and the proportion that are gutted fish is unknown. The final proportion of the ACL will never be precise under this system, and actual landings may be exceeding the ACL because of the difference between gutted to whole weight conversions for some species. The Committee will discuss use of common unit for ACLs, quotas and tracking, and how to improve reporting for these species to capture a more accurate picture of landings.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

G. Gulf Council Meeting Report (Attachment 4)

The Gulf Council met in January/February 2017. Council staff will provide an overview of Gulf Council decisions for CMP Amendments 27 and 29.

H. CMP Amendment 29 (Attachments 5a-5c)

Amendment 29 (**Attachment 5a**) includes actions to establish an allocation sharing system for Gulf king mackerel and modify Gulf king mackerel recreational accountability measures to apply under the potential allocation sharing system. The Gulf Council was scheduled to approve the amendment for formal review at their January/February 2017 meeting, but decided to postpone work on the amendment indefinitely. The Committee will consider formal review or to stop work on the amendment.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Consider formal review or stop development of amendment.

I. Items for Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Meeting

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (AP) is scheduled to meet in April 2017. The Committee will review potential items to be included in the AP meeting agenda, and provide direction to staff on convening the Cobia Sub-Panel with the AP.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

J. Other Business

The Committee will address items under Other Business as appropriate.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary