

**DRAFT**  
**SUMMARY REPORT**  
**MACKEREL COBIA COMMITTEE**  
**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**Charleston, SC**  
**September 28, 2017**

The Committee approved minutes from the June 2017 meeting. The Committee approved the agenda.

**Status of Commercial Catches v. ACLs**

The Committee received an update on commercial landings for Atlantic king mackerel, Atlantic Spanish mackerel and Atlantic and Florida east coast cobia from SERO staff.

**Status of Amendments under Formal Review**

The Committee also received an update on CMP Framework Amendment 4, which was transmitted for formal review on October 28, 2016. The proposed rule published on February 21, 2017, and the comment period closed March 23, 2017. The final rule was published on August 4, 2017 and became effective on September 5, 2017. CMP Framework Amendment 5 was transmitted for formal review on December 2, 2016. The proposed rule was published on March 1, 2017, and the comment period closed on March 31, 2017. The final rule was published on August 1, 2017 and became effective on August 31, 2017.

**Update on the ASMFC Interstate Plan for Cobia**

Bob Beal, Executive Director of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, briefed the Committee on the status of the interstate management plan. Public comment on the draft plan will be accepted until 5pm on October 10, 2017. The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board will review and approve the final plan at the ASMFC meeting in October 2017.

**State Reports on Atlantic Cobia 2017**

State agency representatives provided updates to the Committee on recreational harvest of Atlantic cobia in state waters for 2017.

**Request for recalculation of 2015 and 2016 recreational landings for Atlantic cobia**

The Committee received an update on their request that MRIP re-calculate the 2015 and 2016 Atlantic cobia recreational harvest using alternative annual estimates of catch and effort. Dr. David Van Voorhees indicated that that they were unable to complete a thorough evaluation of alternative estimation approaches for Atlantic cobia within the requested time frame. Additionally, it was noted that NOAA Fisheries remains committed to working with the Councils to certify appropriate alternative approaches for situations where MRIP estimates are not sufficient. Dr. Bonnie Ponwith reported that re-calculations would require extensive resources and review, and could be available at a later date. The Committee directed staff to follow up with Dr. Van Voorhees to request an expected timeline for the recalculated estimates.

### **CMP Amendment 31**

At their June 2017 meeting, the Committee directed staff to begin work on a plan amendment to address Atlantic cobia and evaluate options for a complementary plan with ASMFC as well as removal of Atlantic cobia from the management unit. Council staff provided a summary of scoping comments related to Amendment 31. Council staff also reviewed an options paper for Amendment 31.

The Committee approved the following motions:

**MOTION # 1. ACCEPT IPT LANGUAGE FOR PURPOSE AND NEED.**  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE (2 OPPOSED)  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL (1 OPPOSED)

The purpose is to reduce complexity of management and facilitate improved coordination of state and federal management of Atlantic cobia.

The need is to provide for effective management of Atlantic Cobia without reducing protection to the stock.

**MOTION # 2. APPROVE ALTERNATIVES 1 THROUGH 5 IN DRAFT CMP AMENDMENT 31.**  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE (1 OPPOSED)  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL (1 OPPOSED)

**Alternative 1 (No Action):** Retain Atlantic cobia in the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic regions (CMP FMP).

**Alternative 2:** Remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) would manage cobia through the interstate management plan.

**Alternative 3:** Do not remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP. Establish process for complementary management of Atlantic cobia with the ASMFC.

- NMFS would continue to apply the mandated annual catch limit (ACL) for Atlantic cobia and implement accountability measures, as necessary. The South Atlantic Council would establish the ACLs and AMs through the CMP FMP.
- ASMFC would establish management measures for cobia harvest in state waters. Harvest would be subject to the Atlantic cobia ACL.
- South Atlantic Council would update the CMP FMP to provide consistent regulations for cobia harvest in federal waters through the amendment process, with Gulf Council approval of actions not suitable for a framework amendment.

**Alternative 4:** Do not remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP. Establish process for complementary management of Atlantic cobia with the ASMFC.

- South Atlantic Council would establish a process in which NMFS would update the federal regulations to be consistent with the ASMFC plan, without action by the Council(s).

**Alternative 5:** Remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP after the stock assessment is complete. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) would manage cobia through the interstate management plan.

### **Framework to Adjust Atlantic King Mackerel Trip Limits**

The new regulations for king mackerel established in CMP Amendment 26 became effective on May 11, 2017, including updated commercial trip limits for the Atlantic Southern zone. At their April 2017 meeting the AP/Sub-Panel recommended that the Council consider revising the trip limits to allow for a higher trip limit north of the Volusia/Brevard county line, which would mirror trip limits prior to Amendment 26. At their June 2017 meeting the Committee instructed council staff to work with Council members and fishermen to develop alternatives for a framework amendment. Council staff reviewed a document with options for alternatives to be included in a framework amendment addressing Atlantic king mackerel commercial trip limits.

The Committee approved the following motion:

**MOTION #3.** DIRECT STAFF TO START WORK ON A FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT AND APPROVE ALTERNATIVES 1-3, WITH AN OPTION FOR 75 FISH FROM MARCH 1-31.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

**Alternative 1 (No Action):** The commercial trip limits for Atlantic king mackerel:

- North of Flagler/Volusia line: 3,500 lbs year-round
- South of Flagler/Volusia line:
  - Season 1 (Mar - Sept)
    - Mar 1-Mar 31: 50 fish
    - Apr 1: 75 fish until 75% of the Season 1 quota is met, and then the trip limit is 50 fish until Sept 30
  - Season 2 (Oct-Feb): 50 fish
  - Starting Feb 1 through the end of Feb, if less than 70% of the Season 2 quota has been met, the trip limit increases to 75 fish.

**Alternative 2:** Adjust the commercial trip limits for Atlantic king mackerel in the Atlantic Southern Zone for Season 1:

- Season 1
  - March 1- March 31
    - North of Flagler/Volusia line: 3,500 lbs

- South of Flagler/Volusia line: 50 fish
- April 1 – September 30
  - North of Volusia/Brevard line: 3,500 lbs
  - South of Volusia/Brevard line: 75 fish until 75% of the Season 1 quota is met, and then the trip limit is 50 fish until Sept 30

**Alternative 3:** Adjust the commercial trip limits for Atlantic king mackerel in the Atlantic Southern Zone for Season 1:

- Season 1
  - March 1- March 31
    - North of Flagler/Volusia line: 3,500 lbs
    - South of Flagler/Volusia line: 75 fish
  - April 1 – September 30
    - North of Volusia/Brevard line: 3,500 lbs
    - South of Volusia/Brevard line: 75 fish until 75% of the Season 1 quota is met, and then the trip limit is 50 fish until Sept 30

**Alternative 4:** Adjust the commercial trip limits for Atlantic king mackerel in the Atlantic Southern Zone for Season 1:

- Season 1
  - North of Volusia/Brevard line: 3,500 lbs
  - South of Volusia/Brevard line:
    - March 1- March 30: 50 fish
    - April 1 – September 30: 75 fish until 75% of the Season 1 quota is met, and then the trip limit is 50 fish until September 30

**Timing and Task(s)**

**MOTION # 4. ADOPT THE FOLLOWING TIMING AND TASKS:**

1. Send a letter to MRIP requesting a timeline for re-calculated 2015 and 2016 Atlantic cobia recreational landings, and for evaluation of alternative estimation approaches for situation where MRIP data is not sufficient.
2. Develop draft Amendment 31 with approved alternatives for management of Atlantic cobia to be approved for public hearings in December 2017.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL