

**FINAL SUMMARY REPORT
MACKEREL COBIA COMMITTEE
December 8, 2016
Atlantic Beach, NC**

The Committee approved the agenda and the minutes of the September 2016 meeting. Next, the Committee received an update on commercial landings for Atlantic king mackerel, Spanish mackerel and cobia from SERO staff. Commercial harvest of Atlantic cobia closed on December 6, 2016. Rob O'Reilly (MAFMC/VMRC) notified the Committee that the Virginia Marine Resources Commission would meet on December 13 and is expected to close commercial harvest in Virginia state waters on December 14, 2016.

SERO staff next provided a presentation on recreational landings of Atlantic king mackerel, Spanish mackerel and cobia. Recreational landings for Atlantic cobia in 2016 exceeded the recreational ACL. The Committee discussed several members expressed concern and perplexity about how the landings in Wave 4 exceeded the recreational ACL with the EEZ closed and more restrictive measures in Virginia and North Carolina state waters.

The Committee discussed potential cobia actions by the North Carolina and Virginia Commissions for 2017. The VMRC will likely discuss cobia at their April 2017 meeting, and may consider starting the season later and closing earlier; a boat limit of 1/boat/day; among other measures. The North Carolina Commission may discuss cobia at their February 2017 meeting.

Amendment Updates

The Committee also received an update on CMP Amendment 26, which was transmitted for formal review on July 7, 2016, and SERO is preparing the proposed rule. CMP Framework Amendment 4 was transmitted for formal review on October 28, 2016, and CMP Framework Amendment 5 was transmitted for formal review on December 2, 2016. SERO is preparing the proposed rule for both framework amendments.

Gulf Council Report

Council staff reported on the October 2016 Gulf Council meeting. The Gulf Council took final action on Framework Amendment 5 and Amendment 30. The Gulf Council also selected preferred alternatives for Amendment 29 and approved the amendment for public hearings.

CMP Amendment 30 (Atlantic cobia recreational fishing year)

Council staff notified the Committee that SERO had raised a concern about Amendment 30, in which different fishing years would complicate the current accountability measures in place, which require an evaluation of total landings and total ACL. The Committee considered several options, but decided to add commercial fishing year to the amendment and modify the timeline (see below).

The Committee approved the following motions:

MOTION 1. ADD AN ACTION TO CHANGE THE COMMERCIAL FISHING YEAR START DATE WITH SAME ALTERNATIVES AS FOR RECREATIONAL FISHING YEAR, WITH A PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AS MAY 1.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: POSTPONE FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF CMP AMENDMENT 30 UNTIL THE ASMFC COMPLETES THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTERSTATE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR COBIA.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION APPROVED BY COUNCIL.
MAIN MOTION APPROVED BY COUNCIL.

The Council did not continue with the remaining Committee motions pertaining to CMP Amendment 30.

The Committee directed staff to combine the actions into one action for both commercial and recreational fishing year.

Action: Modify the recreational and commercial fishing year for Atlantic cobia

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not modify the current recreational and commercial fishing year of January 1 through December 31.

Preferred Alternative 2. Modify the recreational and commercial fishing year for Atlantic cobia to be May 1 through April 30.

Alternative 3. Modify the recreational and commercial fishing year for Atlantic cobia to be June 1 through May 31.

Alternative 4. Modify the recreational and commercial fishing year for Atlantic cobia to be April 1 through March 31.

MOTION 2. ACCEPT THE CHANGED WORDING TO THE PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT. APPROVED BY COMMITTEE.

Purpose for Action

The purpose of this amendment is to modify the recreational and commercial fishing year for Atlantic migratory group cobia to ensure consistent, stable, and equitable fishing opportunities for participants in the Atlantic cobia component of the coastal migratory pelagics fishery.

Need for Action

The need for this amendment is to respond to changing fishery characteristics for Atlantic cobia, while increasing social and economic benefits of the coastal migratory pelagics fishery through sustainable fishing opportunities and harvest of Atlantic cobia.

Note: The Council may consider amending the motion to state that the Council accepts the draft Purpose and Need, as modified.

Council staff presented the following expected timing for the amendment:

December 2016: South Atlantic Council adds commercial fishing year to the action

January 2017: Finalize additional analysis and prepare a public hearing document

February 2017: Public comment period and webinar hearing

March 2017: South Atlantic Council reviews public input and approves for formal review

April 2017: Gulf Council reviews and approves for formal review

August/September 2017: Implementation

The Committee discussed how the modified fishing year (if approved) would apply if it was implemented in September. E.g., would landings be applied retrospectively from the previous May 1, or would the fishery re-open in the fall as a 'new' fishing year? The Committee directed staff to compile examples of how changes to fishing year for other species has been applied for the March 2017 meeting.

ASMFC Public Information Document for Cobia

Dr. Louis Daniel presented an overview of the public information document for the ASMFC cobia management plan. The Committee did not provide any specific comments directed at ASMFC at this time. However, the Committee discussed how state shares may work under the ASFMC plan, timing for stock assessment and interim options to provide information about stock status, and discrepancies between SEFSC recreational landings and MRIP landings. Bonnie Ponwith explained that the SEFSC uses a different methodology to convert numbers of fish to pounds of fish than the MRIP methodology. It is expected that MRIP will move to the SEFSC methodology in the near future.

Bob Beal (ASMFC) pointed out that the potential modified fishing year may complicate development of the ASMFC plan, and it was suggested that the Council should postpone continued work on Amendment 30 at this time.

CMP Amendment 29 (Gulf king mackerel allocations)

The Committee decided to postpone any action on Amendment 29 until the March 2017 meeting.

MOTION 3. ADOPT TIMING AND TASK MOTION. APPROVED BY COUNCIL.

TIMING AND TASKS

- 1) Compile examples of how modified fishing years have been applied for other species.