

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
MACKEREL COBIA COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Ponte Vedra, FL
June 15, 2017

The Committee approved minutes from the March 2017 meeting. The Committee approved the agenda with the addition of an item for the ASMFC request to begin discussions to remove Atlantic cobia from the federal fishery management plan.

Status of Commercial and Recreational Catches v. ACLs

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

Status of Amendments under Formal Review

The Committee also received an update on CMP Amendment 26, which was transmitted for formal review on July 7, 2016. The final rule published on April 11, 2017, and became effective on May 11, 2017. CMP Framework Amendment 4 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. SERO is working on the final rule package. CMP Framework Amendment 5 was transmitted for formal review on December 2, 2016. The proposed rule published on March 1, 2017, and the comment period closed on March 31, 2017. SERO is working on the final rule package.

Meeting Report from the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel and Cobia Sub-Panel

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (AP) and Cobia Sub-Panel met jointly on April 19-20, 2017. AP Chair Ira Laks provided a summary report of the meeting and presented the AP and Sub-Panel recommendations to the Committee. AP Member Steve English provided an overview of the reason for the recommendation to change the mesh size requirements and measuring method for Spanish mackerel gillnets, and reason for the request for a king mackerel catch allowance on Spanish mackerel gillnet trips. The mesh size issue will be brought to the Law Enforcement AP to develop options for requirements. Council staff also reviewed a summary of the cobia fishery performance report generated at the AP/Sub-Panel meeting.

ASMFC Request to Remove Atlantic Cobia from the federal Fishery Management Plan

In May 2017, ASMFC sent a letter to the Councils to request that the South Atlantic Council discuss removing Atlantic cobia from the Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plan (FMP), which would transfer all management authority to the ASMFC. Council staff reviewed a discussion document outlining the benefits and challenges to removing Atlantic cobia from the federal FMP. Federal mandates would require that the Council consider a range of alternatives in addition to an option to remove Atlantic cobia from the FMP, such as joint and complementary management.

The Committee approved the following motion:

MOTION #1. DIRECT STAFF TO BEGIN WORK ON A PLAN AMENDMENT TO ADDRESS ATLANTIC COBIA AND EVALUATE OPTIONS FOR COMPLEMENTARY PLAN WITH ASMFC AS WELL AS REMOVAL OF ATLANTIC COBIA FROM THE MANAGEMENT UNIT.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL (2 OPPOSED)

Emergency Action for Atlantic Cobia

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (AP) and Cobia Sub-Panel approved a motion (6 in favor/5 opposed/4 abstained) to recommend that the Council request NMFS to consider emergency action to change the current stock boundary and annual catch limits (ACLs) for Atlantic and Gulf cobia to the boundary and ACLs in place prior to CMP Amendment 20B. Council staff reviewed a discussion document on emergency action criteria in the context of Atlantic cobia.

The Committee did not make any motions in regards to the AP/Sub-Panel's recommendation.

MOTION #2: THE COUNCIL WILL NOT CONSIDER EMERGENCY ACTION TO CHANGE THE BOUNDARY AND ACLS.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL.

MOTION #3: REQUEST MRIP RE-CALCULATE THE 2015 AND 2016 ATLANTIC COBIA RECREATIONAL HARVEST USING ANNUAL ESTIMATE OF CATCH AND EFFORT.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL.

ASMFC Interstate Management 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. The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board will review a draft plan at their August 2017 meeting and approve it for public hearings to be held in the fall. The Board will review and approve the final plan 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.

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. 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. Council staff will work with Council members and fishermen to develop alternatives for a framework amendment to present at the next Committee meeting.

Common Units for CMP Species

Commercial landings for Atlantic king mackerel and Atlantic Spanish mackerel, in addition to commercial and recreational landings of Atlantic cobia are tracked “as reported.” SEFSC provided information that the landings can be tracked with the Council-preferred units.

The Committee specified that the preference is for Atlantic Spanish mackerel to be tracked in whole weight, and Atlantic king mackerel should be tracked in gutted weight.

Note: Council staff drafts the timing and task motion based on Committee action. If points require clarification, they will be added to the draft motion. The Committee should review this wording carefully to be sure it accurately reflects their intent prior to making the motion.

Timing and Task(s)

MOTION # 4. ADOPT THE FOLLOWING TIMING AND TASKS:

- 1) Work with Law Enforcement AP to develop alternatives to update the mesh size requirements for Spanish mackerel gillnets and clarify how mesh will be measured.
- 2) Develop draft action(s) and alternatives for a plan amendment with options for complementary management of Atlantic cobia or remove Atlantic cobia from the federal FMP.
- 3) Work with Council members and fishermen to develop alternatives for a framework amendment to revise the Atlantic king mackerel commercial trip limits for the Southern Zone.
- 4) Send a letter to the Gulf Council to discuss coordination of revising the units to track CMP species.
- 5) Send a letter to MRIP to recalculate the 2015 and 2016 recreational landings for Atlantic cobia using annual estimates of catch and effort.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL.