



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

**AUG 23 2017**

Dr. Michelle Duval  
Chair  
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
4055 Faber Place, Suite 201  
North Charleston, SC 29405

Dear Dr. Duval:

Thank you for your letter of June 27, and our subsequent telephone conversation, regarding the Council's request for MRIP to recalculate 2015 and 2016 Atlantic cobia recreational harvest statistics using an "annual estimate" of catch and effort. In our telephone conversation you explained that the Council was specifically requesting application of one of the methods outlined in a presentation John Foster and I gave to the SAFMC Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in October 2015. You also asked us to consider applying other potential estimation approaches and to suggest which approach would be best to use for ACL tracking of Atlantic cobia. You asked to receive this information on or before August 21, 2017, for inclusion in the briefing book for your September 2017 meeting.

Unfortunately, we are unable to complete a thorough evaluation of alternative estimation approaches for Atlantic cobia within the requested time frame. However, as indicated in Dr. Werner's recent letter, NOAA Fisheries is committed to working collaboratively with the fishery management councils to develop and certify statistically sound approaches that would be appropriate to apply in specific situations when standard MRIP estimates are not sufficiently precise. The information we presented to the SSC identified a subset of potential methods that could be applied for species rarely encountered in the on-site access point surveys of angler catches. We are hoping to engage the Council SSCs in identifying, developing, testing and evaluating a broader range of alternative methods that meet the needs of all the Councils.

I am happy to discuss planning of this effort with you, and suggest we discuss the best way to move forward by conference call prior to the September Council meeting. I look forward to working with you and your SSC to identify and evaluate alternative estimation methods that can better support the management needs for the South Atlantic.

Sincerely,

Dave Van Voorhees, PhD  
Chief  
Fisheries Statistics Division  
Office of Science and Technology



[dave.van.voorhees@noaa.gov](mailto:dave.van.voorhees@noaa.gov)

Cc: Cisco Werner  
Sam Rauch  
Ned Cyr  
Alan Risenhoover  
Bonnie Ponwith  
Roy Crabtree  
Jack McGovern



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

8 August 2017

Dr. Michelle Duval  
Chair  
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
4055 Faber Place, Suite 201  
North Charleston, SC 29405

Dear Dr. Duval:

Thank you for your letter of June 27, and our subsequent telephone conversation, expressing the Council's concerns about alternative estimation methods for species that are rarely encountered in the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) on-site catch surveys. The results of this work are of great importance to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and our stakeholders in the South Atlantic.

NOAA Fisheries is committed to working collaboratively with the Fishery Management Councils to develop and certify statistically sound approaches that would be appropriate to apply in specific situations when standard MRIP estimates are not sufficiently precise. The information John Foster and Dave Van Voorhees presented to the SAFMC's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in October 2015 exemplified a subset of potential methods that could be applied to select species. By jointly planning a workshop with the Council SSCs, we intended to expand the range of potential estimation approaches to be tested and evaluated for application in different situations. We believe it is important to engage the Council SSCs in identifying, developing, testing and evaluating alternative estimation methods for each species to ensure that diverse viewpoints and ideas are considered when matching any new estimation methods with management strategies being employed by the Councils.

Over the coming months, we will be working on a comprehensive, collaborative effort to develop and certify alternative estimation methods that will address the needs of all Councils. We are committed to completing that process as soon as possible while ensuring the thorough scientific evaluation needed to deliver statistically sound approaches that will be applicable to management needs.

I am happy to discuss these and other options with you in greater detail. Finally, I look forward to working with you to improve the effectiveness of MRIP estimation methods in the South Atlantic.



Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CW', is positioned above the typed name.

Cisco Werner, PhD  
NMFS Chief Science Advisor and  
Director of Scientific Programs  
[cisco.werner@noaa.gov](mailto:cisco.werner@noaa.gov)

Cc: Chris Oliver  
Bonnie Ponwith  
Roy Crabtree  
Ned Cyr  
Gordon Colvin  
Dave Van Voorhees  
John Foster  
Gregg Waugh

