

**FINAL**  
**SUMMARY REPORT**  
**MACKEREL COBIA COMMITTEE**  
**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**Jekyll Island, Georgia**  
**March 6, 2025**

The Committee approved the minutes from the March 2024 meeting and the agenda.

**Giant Manta Ray ESA Section 4(d) Rule Development**

Jenny Lee, SERO Protected Resources Division, presented information on two recent studies related to giant manta ray reproductive habitat and giant manta ray interactions with cobia fishing practices in northern and central Florida. NMFS will continue to collect information on activities that may take giant manta rays to help conserve and recover the species and the Sustainable Fisheries Division and Protected Resources Division will work together to evaluate if reinitiation of formal Section 7 consultation on the CMP Biological Opinion is needed. Committee members described their experiences with the practice and recommended that the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel discuss best practices for cobia fishing near manta rays.

**Mackerel Port Meetings Draft Report**

In 2024, at the urging of their Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, the Council hosted a series of 16 in-person and six virtual port meetings along the Atlantic coast. Port meetings attendees discussed their perspectives with other fishery participants and local Council members. Council staff reviewed the draft report from this effort and provided options for moving forward with the development of management actions.

Before determining how to move forward with management actions, the Committee requested more information on results from the Gulf Council on their coastal migratory pelagics stakeholder engagement effort. Additionally, the Council directed staff to bring detailed information from port meetings back on the following management topics:

- Sector allocations for Atlantic Spanish mackerel
- Commercial zones for Atlantic Spanish mackerel
- Regional commercial allocations for Atlantic Spanish mackerel.
- Accountability measures for Atlantic Spanish mackerel
- Recreational bag limit and size limit for Atlantic Spanish mackerel
- Commercial trip limits for Atlantic Spanish mackerel and Atlantic king mackerel
- Sale of tournament caught Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel
- Limited entry for the commercial Spanish mackerel permit
- Recreational permitting for Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel
- Commercial and recreational regulations in state waters for Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel

**Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Spring 2025 Meeting**

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel is scheduled to meet in Charleston, South Carolina, on March 31 and April 1, 2025. The Committee approved the following for inclusion on the agenda:

- Giant Manta Ray Interactions with the Cobia Fishery

- Mackerel Port Meetings Report
  - Include an update on recent Council discussions.
- For-Hire Reporting Improvement Amendment
- For-Hire Limited Entry Amendment
- Lines of Communication Practice Run
- Citizen Science Program Update
- Research and Monitoring Plan Review

### **Other Business**

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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 1: ADOPT THE FOLLOWING TIMING AND TASKS:**

1. Request Gulf Council staff provide a presentation to the Council on their coastal migratory pelagic stakeholder engagement efforts at the June 2025 meeting.
2. Provide a summary of information provided during port meetings on each identified management topic listed above at the June 2025 meeting.
3. Provide a refresher on Atlantic Spanish mackerel catch level recommendations from the SSC based on SEDAR 78 at the June 2025 meeting.
4. Convene a meeting of the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel in Spring 2025 to discuss the topics listed above.

**APPROVED BY COUNCIL**