



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office

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St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

F/SER25-RD

SER16-035

Mr. Sammy Corbett, Commissioner
North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission
Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 769
Morehead City, North Carolina 28557-0769

JUN 15 2016

Dear Mr. Corbett:

Thank you for your letter concerning the recent actions implemented by the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission for cobia in state waters. I recognize that cobia is an important recreational species for North Carolina, and I appreciate the State's efforts to reduce harvest of the species. These measures should assist in constraining recreational landings in state waters off North Carolina.

As you are aware, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) will discuss new management measures for cobia in federal waters at its meeting this week in Cocoa Beach, Florida. The goal of the new measures the Council is considering is to extend future recreational fishing seasons for Atlantic cobia and to provide fair access to the resource for fishermen in all states. Possible management measures for the recreational sector may include vessel limits, increased minimum size limits, decreased bag limits, changes to the fishing year start date, and modified recreational accountability measures.

The Chair of the Council, Dr. Michelle Duval, sent a letter to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) on March 18, 2016, requesting the Commission consider either joint or complementary management of cobia with the Council. At its May 2016 meeting, the Commission indicated that it was committed to exploring options for the development of an interstate fishery management plan (FMP) for cobia. The Policy Board directed the South Atlantic Board to develop alternatives for developing an FMP that is either joint, complementary, or exclusively managed by the Commission to determine what type of FMP is the best way to move forward. The Commission will explore this issue further at its October 2016 meeting.

We will continue to support the Council and Commission in exploring options for managing cobia in the best interest of North Carolina and other Atlantic Coast states. Should you have additional questions, please contact me at (727) 824-5301.

Sincerely,

Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.
Regional Administrator

