

# Coastal Migratory Pelagics Amendment 31 (Atlantic cobia management)



## Decision Document

## Background

After the 2015 overage and subsequent shortened 2016 recreational season for Atlantic cobia, the South Atlantic Council started work on an amendment to revise Atlantic cobia management measures to help reduce the rate of harvest (extend the season) and to reduce the likelihood that the ACL would be exceeded in future years.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the South Atlantic Council requested that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) consider complementary management for cobia, and the Commission began work on an interstate management plan.

The recreational closure in federal waters for 2016 became effective on June 20, 2016, at which time South Carolina also closed their state waters to recreational harvest. Virginia and North Carolina implemented harvest limits but kept state waters open through August and September, respectively. Georgia did not close state waters, but most cobia are caught in federal waters off Georgia.

Following notification that 2016 landings had again exceeded the Atlantic cobia ACL, NMFS closed the recreational season on January 24, 2017. South Carolina closed state waters to track the federal closure. Georgia did not close state waters but requested that NMFS open federal waters to allow Georgia fishermen to have some access to cobia. Virginia implemented harvest limits with a season in state waters of June 1 through September 15, 2017, and North Carolina specified harvest limits with a season in state waters of May 1 through August 31, 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> The final rule for CMP Framework Amendment 4 was published on August 4, 2017, with an effective date of September 5, 2017.

In May 2017, the ASMFC’s South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board approved a motion to request that the South Atlantic Council transfer sole management of cobia to the ASMFC, which would require that Atlantic cobia be removed from the federal fishery management plan. In June 2017, the South Atlantic Council directed staff to start work on an amendment with options to remove Atlantic cobia from the federal fishery management plan, or for complementary management of Atlantic cobia with ASMFC.

**ASMFC’s Atlantic Cobia Interstate FMP**

In November 2018, The ASMFC approved management measures for Atlantic cobia in state waters. Recreational limits follow those set up in CMP Framework Amendment 4 with a 36” FL minimum size (or TL equivalent), 1 fish per person or 6 fish per vessel limit, whichever is more restrictive. Recreational ACL will be allocated to states based on 5-year/10-year average landings (**Table 1**). These allocations are soft harvest targets, with landings monitored every three years. Recreational harvest will be reduced by 1% for de minimis states. De minimis states may match the regulations of the adjacent non-de minimis state OR accept a 1 fish per vessel limit with a minimum size limit of 29” FL. Commercial limits also follow those set up in CMP Framework Amendment 4 with 33” FL minimum size and 2 fish per person or 6 fish per vessel, whichever is more restrictive. State implementations plans should be submitted to ASMFC by January 2018. The new regulations will go into effect April 2018, with compliance reports completed by July 2018.

**Table 1.** State-specific allocations of a coastwide recreational harvest limit that is equivalent to the federal Atlantic cobia ACL of 620,000 pounds.

State	Allocation	Soft Target w. Current ACL
Georgia	9.5%	58,311 lbs.
South Carolina	12.2%	74,885 lbs.
North Carolina	38.5%	236,316 lbs.
Virginia	39.8%	244,292 lbs.
<i>De minimis</i>	1%	6,200 lbs.

If Atlantic cobia is maintained in the federal fishery management plan, a quota allocation to each state by ASMFC would be based on the ACL established by the South Atlantic Council. Alternatively, if Atlantic cobia is removed from the federal fishery management plan, the ASMFC may choose to base quotas on a different overall harvest limit. Any management measures by the ASMFC will still be dependent on the most recent stock assessment and the best available science.

**MSA Considerations**

NMFS guidelines for determining whether to include species in an FMU for purposes of federal conservation and management direct the Councils to consider the following seven factors (50 CFR §600.340(b)(2)):

- (i) The importance of the fishery to the Nation and to the regional economy.
- (ii) The condition of the stock or stocks of fish and whether an FMP can improve or maintain that condition.
- (iii) The extent to which the fishery could be or is already adequately managed by states, by

state/Federal programs, by Federal regulations pursuant to FMPs or international commissions, or by industry self-regulation, consistent with the policies and standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

- (iv) The need to resolve competing interests and conflicts among user groups and whether an FMP can further that resolution.
- (v) The economic condition of a fishery and whether an FMP can produce more efficient utilization.
- (vi) The needs of a developing fishery, and whether an FMP can foster orderly growth.
- (vii) The costs associated with an FMP, balanced against the benefits.

## **Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFCMA)**

The ACFCMA establishes management between the Atlantic states and specifies involvement of and coordination with the Secretary of Commerce and NMFS. For this amendment, there is one specific section to highlight:

Sec. 5103. - State-Federal cooperation in Atlantic coastal fishery management

(a) Federal support for State coastal fisheries programs The Secretary in cooperation with the Secretary of the Interior shall develop and implement a program to support the interstate fishery management efforts of the Commission. The program shall include activities to support and enhance State cooperation in collection, management, and analysis of fishery data; law enforcement; habitat conservation; fishery research, including biological and socioeconomic research; and fishery management planning.

(b) Federal regulation in exclusive economic zone

(1) In the absence of an approved and implemented fishery management plan under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), and after consultation with the appropriate Councils, the Secretary may implement regulations to govern fishing in the exclusive economic zone that are (A) compatible with the effective implementation of a coastal fishery management plan; and (B) consistent with the national standards set forth in section 301 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1851).

## **Landings**

In recent years, the proportion of Atlantic cobia caught in state waters has increased (**Table 2**), and landings from state and federal waters count towards the ACL. Atlantic cobia are included in a federal fishery management plan, there is a federal mandate to set an annual catch limit (ACL) and associated accountability measures. Recreational landings of Atlantic cobia exceeded the federal ACL in 2015 and 2016, resulting in recreational harvest closures in federal waters (**Table 3**). Commercial landings of Atlantic cobia also exceeded the federal ACL in 2015 and 2016 (**Table 4**).

**Table 2.** Landings of Atlantic cobia in state and federal waters from 2012- 2016 (recreational and commercial, in lbs)

	<b>Landings from state waters (% of total landings)</b>	<b>Landings from federal waters (% of total landings)</b>	<b>Unknown<sup>1</sup></b>
2012	41.6%	57.2%	1.2%
2013	79.1%	19.5%	1.4%
2014	79.1%	17.2%	3.8%
2015	80.2%	18.1%	1.7%
2016 <sup>2</sup>	92.3%	7.0%	0.7%

Data source: MRIP and SEFSC ACL Dataset (5/2/17).

<sup>1</sup>Landings that cannot be designated as state or federal waters are from commercial landings.

<sup>2</sup>Recreational harvest in federal waters closed in 2016 on June 20<sup>th</sup>, which may have resulted in a relatively lower proportion of landings from federal waters for 2016.

**Table 3.** Recreational landings of Atlantic cobia in state and federal waters from 2015 – 2016.

	<b>Annual Catch Limit</b>	<b>Landings (ww)</b>	<b>Percent of ACL</b>
2015	630,000 lbs.	1,554,395 lbs.	247%
2016	620,000 lbs.	1,336,531 lbs.	216%
2017 <sup>1</sup>	620,000 lbs.	534,476 lbs.	86%

Date source: MRIP dataset (11/1/17)

<sup>1</sup>Preliminary recreational landings through Wave 4 (July/August).

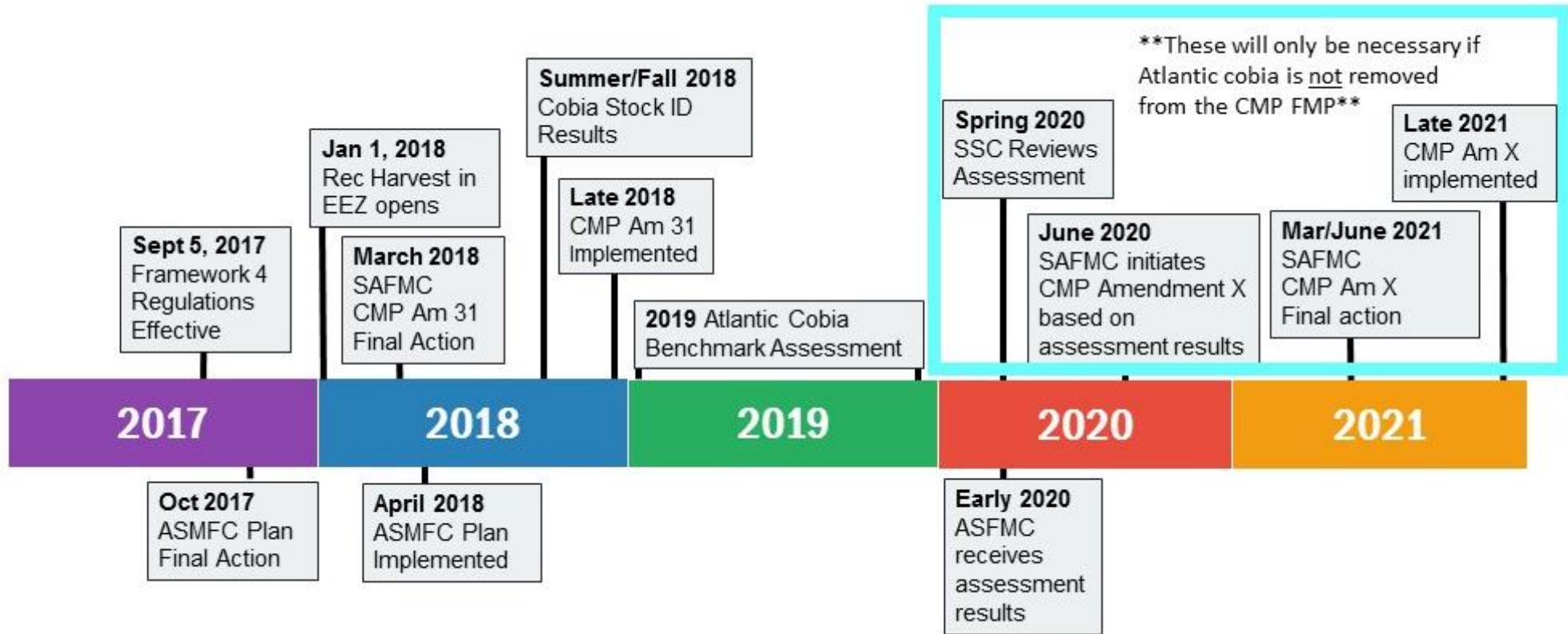
**Table 4.** Commercial landings of Atlantic cobia in state and federal waters from 2015 – 2016.

	<b>Annual Catch Limit</b>	<b>Landings (ww)</b>	<b>Percent of ACL</b>
2015	60,000 lbs.	71,790 lbs.	120%
2016	50,000 lbs.	77,649 lbs.	155%
2017 <sup>1</sup>	50,000 lbs.	23,444 lbs.	46.8%

Date source: SEFSC ACL dataset.

<sup>1</sup>Preliminary commercial landings through August 2017, state landings are not available at this time.

**Expected Timeline of Council and ASMFC Actions**



## Actions in this amendment

- **Action:** Revise the management system for Atlantic cobia.

## Objectives for this meeting

- Review IPT changes to Purpose and Need, modify as necessary and approve.
- Review IPT changes to action and alternatives, modify as necessary and approve.
- Review draft amendment and select preferred alternative(s).
- Approve draft amendment for public hearings.

## Expected amendment timing

- ✓ June 2017 Council directs staff to start work on amendment.
- ✓ August 2017 Scoping webinar.
- ✓ September 2017 Council reviews scoping comments and approves actions/alternatives to be analyzed.
- December 2017 Council reviews the draft amendment, selects preferred alternative(s), modifies the document as necessary, and approves for public hearings.
- January 2018 Public hearings.
- March 2018 Council takes final action on CMP Amendment 31
- April 2018 Gulf Council takes final action on CMP Amendment 31
- April 2018 CMP Amendment 31 submitted for Secretarial Review.

## Purpose and need statement

### Purpose for Actions

The purpose is to reduce complexity of management and facilitate improved coordination of state and federal management of Atlantic cobia.

**IPT Recommendation:** The purpose of this action is to ~~reduce complexity of management and~~ facilitate improved coordination between state and federal management of Atlantic cobia.

### Need for Actions

The need is to provide for effective management of Atlantic Cobia without reducing protection to the stock.

**IPT Recommendation:** The need is to ~~constraint harvest of Atlantic cobia to the ACL while providing for an equitable distribution of harvest throughout the stock's range. provide for effective management of Atlantic Cobia without reducing protection to the stock.~~

### IPT Recommendations

IPT recommends removal of “reduce complexity of management” from the purpose statement because some of the alternatives for this action might result in different state and federal regulations creating additional complexity.

IPT revised the need statement so that it addresses the specific management need (constrain harvest) and speaks directly to national standards three and four.

### Committee Action:

REVIEW AND MODIFY THE SUGGESTED PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT  
ACCEPT THE IPT’S RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO PURPOSE AND NEED  
OTHER?

### Draft Motions:

**DRAFT MOTION:** ACCEPT THE IPT’S RECOMMENDED WORDING CHANGE FOR PURPOSE AND NEED

# Proposed Actions and Alternatives

## Action 1. Revise the management system for Atlantic cobia.

### Action Alternatives:

**Alternative 1 (No Action):** Retain Atlantic cobia in the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic regions (CMP FMP).

**IPT Recommendation: Alternative 1 (No Action).** ~~Retain Atlantic cobia in~~ Continue the current management of Atlantic cobia via the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic regions (CMP FMP).

**Alternative 2:** Remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) would manage cobia through the interstate management plan.

**IPT Recommendation: Alternative 2.** Remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP. ~~The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) would manage cobia through the interstate management plan.~~

**Alternative 3:** Do not remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP. Establish process for complementary management of Atlantic cobia with the ASMFC.

- NMFS would continue to apply the mandated annual catch limit (ACL) for Atlantic cobia and implement accountability measures, as necessary. The South Atlantic Council would establish the ACLs and AMs through the CMP FMP.
- ASMFC would establish management measures for cobia harvest in state waters. Harvest would be subject to the Atlantic cobia ACL.
- South Atlantic Council would update the CMP FMP to provide consistent regulations for cobia harvest in federal waters through the amendment process, with Gulf Council approval of actions not suitable for a framework amendment.

**IPT Recommendation: Alternative 3.** ~~Do not remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP.~~ Establish a ~~process~~ policy in the CMP FMP for complimentary management of Atlantic cobia with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC).

- ~~○ NMFS would continue to apply the mandated annual catch limit (ACL) for Atlantic cobia and implement accountability measures, as necessary. The South Atlantic Council would establish the ACLs and AMs through the CMP FMP.~~
- ~~○ ASMFC would establish management measures for cobia harvest in state waters. Harvest would be subject to the Atlantic cobia ACL.~~



- ~~○ South Atlantic Council would update the CMP FMP to provide consistent regulations for cobia harvest in federal waters through the amendment process, with Gulf Council approval of actions not suitable for a framework amendment.~~

**Alternative 4:** Do not remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP. Establish process for complementary management of Atlantic cobia with the ASMFC.

- South Atlantic Council would establish a process in which NMFS would update the federal regulations to be consistent with the ASMFC plan, without action by the Council(s).

**IPT Recommendation: Alternative 4.** ~~Do not remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP.~~ Establish a ~~process for complementary management of Atlantic cobia with ASMFC~~ framework procedure in the CMP FMP for an enhanced cooperative management system with the ASMFC that allows changes to Atlantic cobia management through NMFS rulemaking.

- ~~○ South Atlantic Council would establish a process in which NMFS would update the federal regulations to be consistent with the ASMFC plan, without action by the Council(s).~~

**Alternative 5.** Remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP after the stock assessment is complete.

**IPT Recommendation:** Remove Alternative 5, for analyzes purposes it isn't substantively different from Alternative 2. The discussion for Alternative 2 could comment on waiting until the stock assessment is complete.

## **Discussion:**

This **Action** includes alternatives to revise the management system for Atlantic cobia. The Council is considering this change to facilitate coordination between state and federal management in order to prevent overharvest of Atlantic cobia and ensure equitable distribution of access.

**Alternative 1 (No Action)** would not change the current management structure for Atlantic cobia. **Alternative 2** would remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP. ASMFC would have the option of extending state management measures into federal waters. **Alternative 3** updates the CMP FMP to acknowledge ASMFC's role and how the Council would go about considering changes made in state waters for implementation in federal waters (i.e. case by case). **Alternative 4** sets up a procedure in which ASMFC can propose rules directly to NMFS, without formal action from the Council. Rules would still need to meet Magnuson-Stevens Act standards and FMP objectives. The Council will be informed of ASMFC rules and provide comment on whether the rules meet appropriate federal and FMP standards. The Council can still adjust Cobia management through the normal amendment process. **Alternative 5** would remove Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP after the benchmark stock assessment scheduled to begin in early 2019.

Removal of Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP under **Alternatives 2 and 5** would require consideration of NFMS guidelines from including a species in a fishery management unit (50 CFR §600.340(b)(2)) including:

1. the importance of the fishery to the Nation and the regional economy;
2. whether an FMP can improve the condition of the stock;
3. the extent to which the fishery could be or already is adequately managed by states;
4. whether an FMP can further the resolution of competing interests and conflicts;
5. whether an FMP can produce more efficient utilization of the fishery;
6. whether an FMP can foster orderly growth of a developing fishery; and
7. costs of the FMP balanced against benefits.

Removal would also result in Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for cobia no longer being identified and described pursuant to 50 CFR §600.15(a)

Under **Alternative 2 and 5**, scientific support would still be available to ASMFC through NMFS. Section 5103(a) of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act of 1993 (Atlantic Coastal Act) states that the federal government will provide support for state coastal fisheries programs in the form of “collection, management, and analysis of fishery data; law enforcement; habitat conservation; fishery research, including biological and socioeconomic research; and fishery management planning.” Additionally, Section 5103(b) states in the absence of a federal FMP, the Secretary may extend state regulations into federal waters.

Currently, Gulf cobia is managed by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. This action addresses management for Atlantic cobia only. Management of Gulf cobia will not be affected. Should the upcoming Stock ID workshop for Cobia (results anticipated late 2019) indicate a shift in the boundary between Atlantic and Gulf cobia, the state of Florida may experience some complexity wherein part of the state’s coast would be subject to ASMFC management and the other part of the coast to the Gulf Council’s management. Should the stock boundary shift, any Gulf Council amendments and ASFMC FMP addendums that address the shift should ideally be implemented in a coordinated fashion.

Proposed language for a protocol and procedure in the CMP FMP for an enhanced cooperative management system with the ASMFC (**Alternative 4**):

Note: The two separate policies work together to form the guidelines for the overall policy agreement:

*Protocol* (based on the proposed protocol for federal and State of Florida roles in the management of Spiny Lobster):

1. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (Council) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service acknowledge that cobia harvest occurs primarily in state waters, and extends into the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), in terms of current participants in the directed fishery, fishing, and historical management of the species. As such, cobia management requires cooperative state/federal efforts for effective management through the Fishery Management Plan for

the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Region (CMP FMP).

2. The Council and NOAA Fisheries Service acknowledge that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASFMC) will manage the resource to protect and increase the long-term yields and prevent depletion of cobia stocks and that the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (1993) and ASFMC Interstate Fishery Management Plan Charter, rule implementation procedures, including final approval of the rules by ASFMC's South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board, provide ample and fair opportunity for all persons to participate in the rulemaking procedure.
3. ASFMC acknowledges that rules proposed for implementation under any fishery management plan amendment, regulatory or otherwise, must be consistent with the management objectives of the CMP FMP, the National Standards, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable law. Federal rules will be implemented in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.
4. The Councils and NOAA Fisheries Service agree that, for any rules falling within the scope of those identified in Paragraph 6 of the Procedure below, pertaining only to Atlantic cobia, ASFMC may propose the rule directly to NOAA Fisheries Service, concurrently informing the Council of the nature of the rule, and that NOAA Fisheries Service will implement the rule within the EEZ provided it is consistent under paragraph three. If either of the Councils informs NOAA Fisheries Service of their concern over the rule's inconsistency with paragraph three, NOAA Fisheries Service may not implement the rule until the Council, ASFMC, and NOAA Fisheries Service resolve the issue.
5. ASFMC will have the responsibility for collecting and developing the information upon which to base the rules, including information provided by NOAA Fisheries Service, and cooperatively share the responsibility for enforcement with federal agencies.
6. ASFMC will provide to NOAA Fisheries Service and the Council written explanations of its decisions related to each of the rules; summaries of public comments; biological, economic and social analysis of the impacts of the proposed rule and alternatives; and such other relevant information.
7. The rules will apply to the EEZ for the management area from the Georgia/Florida border to New York and will only apply to the Atlantic cobia stock, unless the Regional Administrator (RA) determines those rules may adversely impact other state and federal fisheries. In that event, the RA may limit the application of the rule, as necessary, to address the problem.
8. NOAA Fisheries Service and the Council agree that their staffs will prepare the proposed and final rules and the associated National Environmental Policy Act documentation and other documents required to support the rule.

*Procedure* (based on language being drafted for Spiny Lobster Amendment 13):

1. This procedure will function under and be governed by the protocols for cooperative management agreed upon by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASFMC) and NMFS.

2. Based on the best available scientific information, ASFMC may develop alternative proposed rules (within the categories identified in Paragraph 6) and socioeconomic analyses on the effects of these alternatives, hold public hearings, and at a final hearing the South Atlantic States/Federal Fisheries Management Board will select each preferred option and approve the final rule(s). After approval of the rule or rules ASFMC will advise the Council and SE Regional Administrator (RA) of NMFS of the recommended rule(s) and proposed implementation date and will provide to the RA and to the Council the analyses of the effects and impacts of the recommended and alternative rules and summaries of public comment. For rules to be implemented by the start of the fishing season (currently January 1, ASFMC must complete these actions on or before July 1. The Council will submit the rule and supporting analyses to the Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSCs) who will advise the RA, through the Council, of the scientific validity of the analyses. The Council will also submit the rule and supporting analyses to the advisory panels for comment.
3. The RA will review the recommended rule, analyses, and public record, and if the RA preliminarily determines that the rule is consistent with the objectives of the CMP FMP, the National Standards, and other applicable law, the RA will notify the Council and ASFMC of his intent to implement the rule in the EEZ. If in the judgment of the RA, the rule or its supporting record are not consistent with these statutory criteria or the CMP FMP objectives, the RA will immediately notify the Council and ASFMC of the deficiencies in the rule or supporting record. ASFMC may submit additional information or analyses to correct the deficiencies in the record.
4. When in the judgment of the Council the rule is not consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) or the objectives of the FMP, the Council will inform the RA and ASFMC. In this case the RA will not proceed with implementation of the rule until this issue has been resolved.
5. When the RA has preliminarily concluded the rule is acceptable, the RA will draft and publish the proposed rule for implementation. Based on ASFMC analyses of impacts, the Council staff, with assistance from ASFMC staff, will prepare the supporting documentation (environmental assessment, regulatory impact review, etc.) that accompany the proposed rule. A reasonable period for public comment on the proposed rule shall be provided.

After reviewing public comment if the RA has concluded the rule is not consistent with the CMP FMP objectives, the national standards, other applicable law, or the provisions of this procedure, the RA will notify the Council and ASFMC of that fact and/or the need for proceeding with implementation by CMP FMP amendment. If the supporting record is still deficient, the RA will delay taking action until the record has been supplemented by ASFMC and/or Council staff. If the RA has concluded the rule is consistent, the RA will publish the final rule. The effective date of rules promulgated under this procedure will be the starting date of the next fishing season following publication of the final rule, unless otherwise agreed upon by ASFMC, the Council, and the RA.

6. PART A (GEAR RESTRICTIONS) Appropriate rules or regulatory changes that can be implemented under this part include:
- a) Specification of gear and vessel identification requirements.
  - b) Specification of gear that may be utilized or prohibited in directed fishery and specification of bycatch levels that may be taken as incidental catch in non-directed fisheries.

PART B (HARVEST RESTRICTIONS) Appropriate rules or regulatory changes that can be implemented under this part include:

- a) Recreational bag and possession limits.
- b) Commercial trip limits.
- c) Changes in fishing seasons.
- d) Changes in minimum legal size.
- e) Changes to permit requirements

### **Summary of Effects:**

#### *Biological Effects*

Under **Alternative 1**, with North Carolina and Virginia choosing not to issue compatible regulations, it would be expected that the Atlantic cobia landings would not decrease from previous years, the ACL would likely be exceeded, and the biological and ecological impacts to the stock would be negative. When a species is removed from an FMP, as would be the case under **Alternative 2** or **Alternative 5**, that species is no longer subject to federal management, and could be subject to an uncontrolled harvest in federal waters, and negative biological impacts to the stock. It is expected that if **Alternative 2** or **Alternative 5** were selected as preferred, the ASFMC would extend their jurisdiction into federal waters and Atlantic group cobia would be managed under the Interstate FMP. **Alternative 2** or **Alternative 5** would diminish the effectiveness of the NMFS to protect localized areas within Essential Fish Habitat that are vulnerable to degradation and especially important ecologically for coastal migratory species. **Alternative 3** would have positive biological impacts to the species because the Interstate FMP would be the primary management vehicle for the species but the South Atlantic Council and NMFS continue to have regulatory authority to manage harvest of the species in federal waters if deemed necessary. **Alternative 4** would be expected to have positive biological impacts to the stock because management would be conducted by the ASFMC through their Interstate FMP. This would likely better suit the needs of Atlantic cobia, which is predominately harvested in state waters.

#### *Economic Effects*

Given the ranges of potential indirect economic effects and transfer of benefits between states, there is no clear ranking of the alternatives. **Alternative 1 (No Action)** would likely be most beneficial for recreational Atlantic cobia fishery participants in North Carolina and Virginia, but least beneficial for participants in South Carolina and Georgia from an economic perspective. **Alternative 2** and **Alternative 5** would likely be the least costly from an administrative standpoint since cobia would be removed from a federal fishery management plan, but the net economic benefits will be dependent on the actions taken by the ASMFC as to how harvest is constrained and how those constraints may affect the Atlantic cobia stock in the long-term.

**Alternative 3** and **Alternative 4** would likely provide economic benefits in some circumstances

through redistributing landings across states within the South and Mid-Atlantic regions and constraining landings to the ACL, thereby preserving the cobia stock and the long-term sustained economic benefits associated with a robust stock. The redistribution of landings would cause positive economic effects for some states but negative economic effects for others.

### *Social Effects*

There is no clear ranking of alternatives, as many cause positive and negative social effects to different coastal communities. **Alternative 1 (No Action)** could generate positive social effects for Virginia and North Carolina, and negative social effects for South Carolina and Georgia if recreational harvest of Atlantic cobia continues to exceed the ACL, resulting in harvest closures in federal waters. **Alternatives 2 and 5** would decrease management complexity, but long-term social effects are largely dependent on the management choices made by ASMFC. **Alternatives 3 and 4** would have the positive social effect of redistributing catch equitably across South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic States and constraining harvest to the ACL. However, redistribution of catch will increase recreational access in some states, while decreasing recreational access in other states. **Alternative 3** allows for more public participation than **Alternative 4**, but is time consuming. **Alternative 4** allows managers to react to changes quickly, but may result in less time for public participation.

### **Committee Action:**

REVIEW AND MODIFY THE SUGGESTED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES  
APPROVE THE IPT'S RECOMMENDED CHANGES  
PICK PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE(S)  
APPROVE DOCUMENT FOR PUBLIC HEARING  
OTHER?

### **Draft Motions:**

**DRAFT MOTION:** ACCEPT THE IPT'S RECOMMENDED WORDING CHANGE FOR ALTERNATIVES 1 THROUGH 4.

**DRAFT MOTION:** ACCEPT THE IPT'S RECOMMENDATION TO REMOVE ALTERNATIVE 5

**DRAFT MOTION:** APPROVE COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS AMENDMENT 31 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS