



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 24, 2017

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This press release revises that of October 19th by correcting the text regarding the commercial possession limit from “2 fish limit per license holder” to “2 fish limit per person.”

ASMFC South Atlantic Board Selects Final Measures for the Interstate FMP for the Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia and Recommends Final Approval by the Commission

Norfolk, VA –The Commission’s South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board selected final measures for the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group (AMG) Cobia and recommended Commission approval of the FMP at its next Business Session meeting, scheduled for November in Baltimore, MD.

The FMP was initiated in response to recent overages of the federal annual catch limit (ACL) for AMG Cobia. Managing the recreational ACL on a coastwide basis has resulted in federal closures and significant overages in 2015 and 2016, disrupting fishing opportunities and jeopardizing the health of the stock.

The Board-approved FMP complements many of the aspects of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s (SAFMC) cobia regulations from Georgia through New York. The recreational fishery will be managed with a one fish bag limit and minimum size limit of 36” fork length (FL) or total length equivalent. Vessel limits will be determined once individual states set their seasonal restrictions, but may not exceed six fish per vessel. State-specific allocations of a coastwide recreational harvest limit that is equivalent to the federal AMG cobia ACL of 620,000 pounds result in the following state-specific soft targets:

- Georgia: 58,311 pounds
- South Carolina: 74,885 pounds
- North Carolina: 236,316 pounds
- Virginia: 244,292 pounds

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

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Recreational harvest overages of specific-state allocations will be evaluated over a three-year time period. If overages occur, states will be required to adjust management measures to reduce harvest in the subsequent three-year period.

The commercial fishery will maintain the current management measures as implemented through the SAFMC plan and continue to be managed with a 33" FL minimum size limit and 2 fish limit per person, with a 6 fish maximum vessel limit. The federal ACL of 50,000 pounds is allocated to the entire commercial fishery from Georgia through New York. The commercial AMG cobia fishery will close once the ACL is projected to be reached.

The FMP provides the opportunity for states to declare *de minimis* status for their recreational fishery if landings constitute less than 1% of the recreational AMG cobia harvest. States must submit implementation plans to the Commission by January 1, 2018 for Technical Committee review and Board approval at the February 2018 meeting in Alexandria, Virginia. Approved plans must be implemented by April 1, 2018. For more information, please contact Dr. Louis Daniel, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at ldaniel@asmfc.org or 252.342.1478.

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