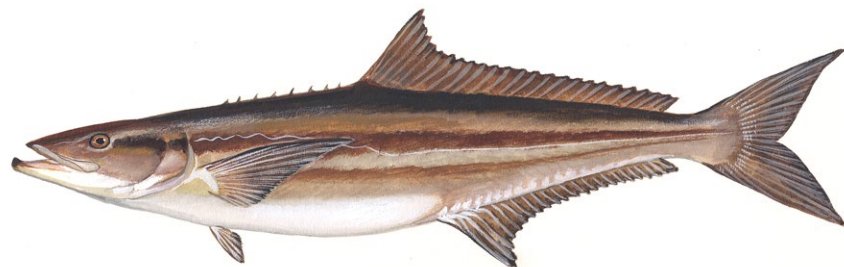




Atlantic Cobia FMP Review: Fishing Year 2023



Coastal Pelagics Management Board
August 6, 2024

Overview



- Status of the FMP
- Status of the Stock
- Status of the Fishery
- PRT Comments and Recommendations

Board action for consideration: Approve the 2024 FMP Review for fishing year 2023, state compliance reports, and de minimis requests.

Status of the FMP



- Amendment 1 (2019) and Addendum I (2020)
- Sole management of Atlantic cobia by ASMFC
- Total Harvest Quota = 80,112 fish
 - Initially set in 2020, 2021-2023, 2024-2026
- Allocation: 96% recreational, 4% commercial
- No management changes in 2023; same measures as 2021-2022

Status of the FMP



- **Commercial Fishery**

- 73,116 pounds coastwide commercial quota
- 33" FL or 37" TL minimum size limit
- 2 fish per person; 6 fish per vessel maximum
- Non-*de minimis* states monitor landings in-season against commercial closure trigger; if trigger reached, coastwide closure with 30 days notice
- 4% of commercial quota set aside for *de minimis* states

Status of the FMP



Recreational Fishery = 76,908 fish coastwide quota

- *Non-de minimis*: GA, SC, NC, VA
 - Minimum size 40" TL / 36" FL
 - Seasons and vessel limits determined by each state, maximum 6 fish per vessel
 - State-specific harvest target
 - Evaluate average harvest against target to determine changes to seasons and vessel limits
- *De Minimis*: MD northward
 - Minimum size 37" TL / 33" FL and vessel limit of 1 fish, or implement same measures as nearest non-DM (VA)
 - Quota set-aside; no evaluation against target

Status of the Stock



- SEDAR 58 (2020) with terminal year 2017
- Atlantic cobia not overfished and overfishing not occurring
- SEDAR 95 ongoing with expected peer review and completion in late 2025

Status of the Fishery



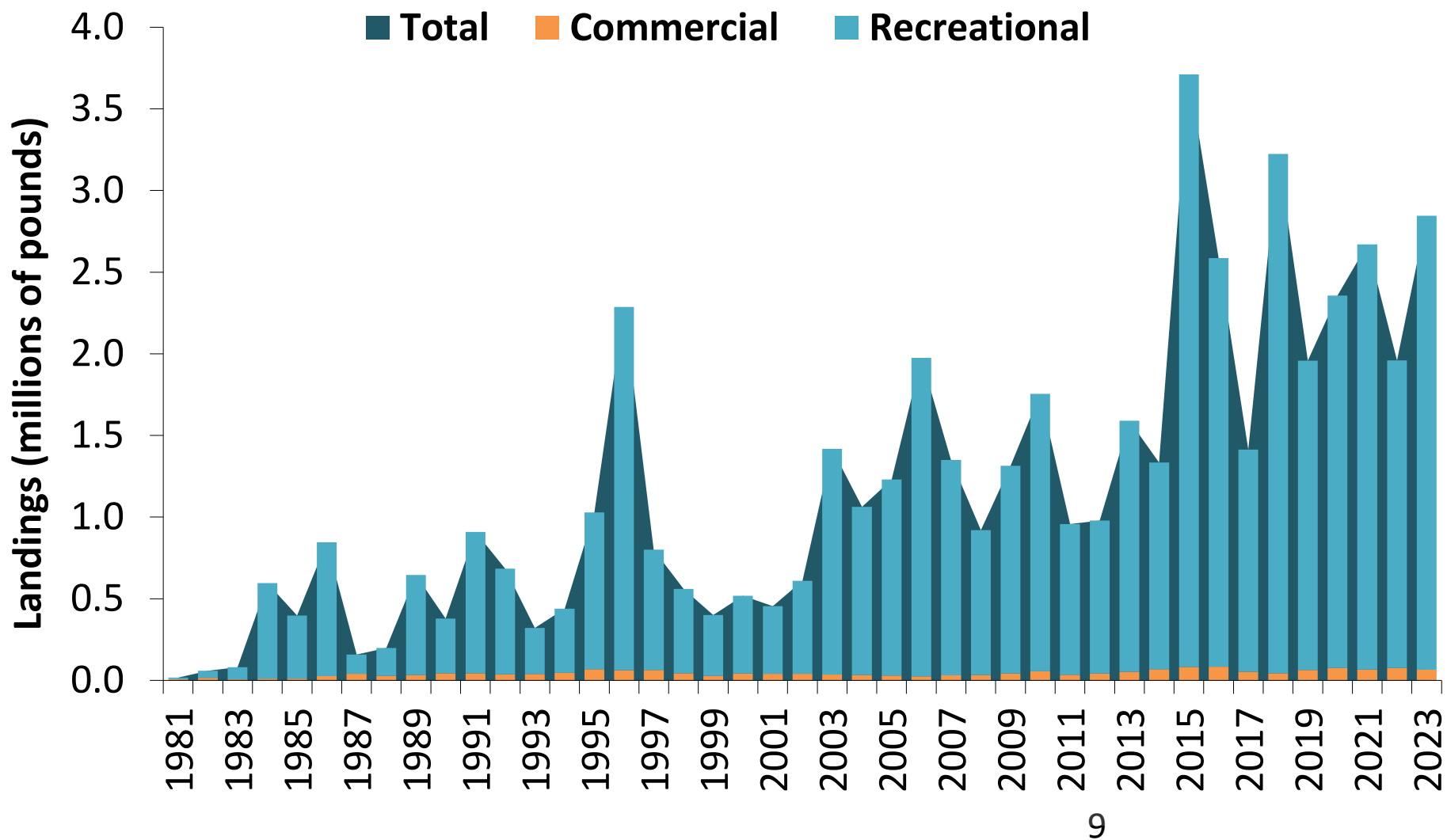
- **Total 2023 landings: 2.8 million pounds**
 - Commercial (2.3%); Recreational (97.7%)
 - 45% increase from 2022
- **2023 Commercial landings: 64,547 pounds**
 - 14% decrease from 2022
 - Quota was not exceeded
 - North Carolina (48%) and Virginia (41%) majority of landings in 2023
 - Quota was not exceeded and closure trigger not reached

Status of the Fishery



- **2023 Recreational Landings: 98,311 fish (2.8 million pounds)**
 - Second highest harvest in time series
 - 41% increase by number from 2022
 - Above the coastwide recreational quota of 76,908 fish
 - 2014-2023 avg: 79,500 fish; 1981-2023 avg: 40,500 fish
- **2023 Recreational Live Releases: 248,890 fish**
 - 2018-2023 average 76% released alive per year
 - 2013-2017 average 65% released alive per year

Status of the Fishery



Status of the Fishery



Year	RI	CT*	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC	SC	GA	Total
2014							21,585	24,601	3,883	2,168	52,237
2015							38,672	47,110	15,575	8,934	110,291
2016						56	43,780	26,421	5,437		75,694
2017							14,613	25,025		19	39,657
2018		569			581	206	80,679	25,331	6,340	233	113,939
2019							55,770	10,090	2,381	72	68,313
2020		219				1,360	50,287	15,067	7,650	2,203	76,786
2021				250		5,084	57,135	10,970	8,858	8,510	90,807
2022			3,462	711			39,668	12,330	6,988	6,641	69,800
2023	361						81,824	629	4,129	11,368	98,311
Soft Target 2020-2024	769 <i>de minimis</i> set-aside						30,302	29,302	9,306	7,229	76,908

Status of the Fishery



- PRT notes changes in harvest likely due to multiple factors, including stock distribution, fish availability nearshore or offshore, state regulatory changes, and level of effort
- North Carolina's 2023 harvest estimate very low
 - NC noted weather conditions reduced the number of fishable days
 - NC noted anecdotal observations suggest cobia are residing in NC waters for a shorter period of time
 - PRT notes the 2023 estimate may be an anomaly and is not necessarily indicative of harvest in future years

2023 Implementation



- PRT found no inconsistencies in state implementation of the FMP
- New York declared an interest in the FMP in January 2024
 - Implemented recreational *de minimis* measures
 - Implemented commercial measures, including in-season monitoring as non-*de minimis*

De Minimis



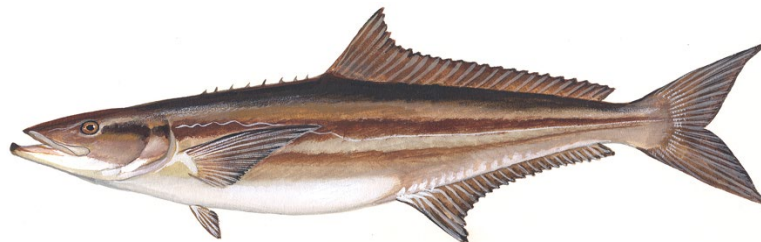
- Recreational harvest <1% of coastwide rec. landings for 2 of 3 years
 - RI, NY, NJ, DE, MD, FL request/qualify
- Commercial harvest <2% of coastwide comm. Landings for 2 of 3 years
 - RI, NJ, DE, MD, GA, FL request and qualify, except NJ
 - NJ landings exceeded 2% threshold in 2021 and 2023
 - NJ notes anomalously high landings compared to past decade
 - NJ notes continued effort toward in-season reporting if landings consistently exceed threshold

PRT Comments



- PRT recommends the Board approve all *de minimis* requests, including NJ commercial
- Multiple states could exceed *de minimis* thresholds over the next few years if landings continue to increase in the Mid-Atlantic, with management implications:
 - Commercial: requiring in-season monitoring in more states
 - Recreational: adding new states to allocation framework (if state allocations are maintained)
 - Challenges reflect why Draft Addendum II was initiated
- SEDAR 95 will inform stock status and future management

Questions?

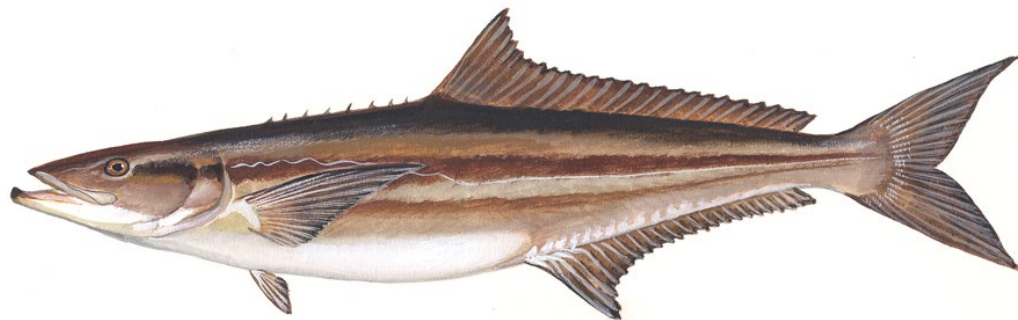




Atlantic Cobia

Draft Addendum II to Amendment 1

Public Comments and AP Report



Coastal Pelagics Management Board

August 7, 2024

Outline



- Current Atlantic Cobia Recreational Management Framework
- Cobia Draft Addendum II
 - Statement of the Problem and Timeline
 - Management Options
 - Public Comment Summary
 - AP Report

Board action for consideration: Select management options, implementation date, and consider final approval of Addendum II.

Current Management



Harvest quota set for up to three years

1% of rec harvest quota set aside for *de minimis*

99% of rec harvest quota allocated to GA, SC, NC, VA based on landings from 2006-2015

Allocation percentages determine state harvest targets (number of fish)

GA, SC, NC, VA evaluate average harvest of up to last 3 years:

- If average harvest exceeds target, state must adjust measures to reduce to target
- If average harvest is less than target for two consecutive years, state can liberalize measures to target

Current Management



- Total harvest quota and state recreational measures have been status quo from 2021-2024
 - Maintained status quo state rec measures in 2024 instead of adjusting based on harvest evaluations
- Recreational measures could change in 2025
 - This addendum to determine allocation framework → state harvest targets → evaluations for 2025 rec measures
- Recreational measures could change again in 2026 or 2027
 - Upcoming stock assessment (SEDAR 95) available to inform 2026 or 2027 total harvest quota and rec measures



Draft Addendum II on Recreational Allocation, Harvest Target Evaluation, and Timeline for Setting Measures

Statement of the Problem



- Current state-by-state allocations based on harvest data from 2006-2015
- Distribution of landings has changed since 2015
 - Increased in some Mid-Atlantic states and relatively stable in southern states → range expansion
 - RI and NY declared into the fishery due to increasing presence of cobia
- Updating the allocation data timeframe would account for changes in landings

Statement of the Problem



- Recreational harvest estimates (MRIP) for cobia tend to have high uncertainty (high PSE)
- Concerns about using uncertain state-level estimates to evaluate performance and change state management
- Could reduce uncertainty by increasing sample size → regional or coastwide allocation framework

Statement of the Problem



- Uncertainty could also be addressed by considering:
 - number of data years included in rolling average for landings evaluation;
 - whether the use of point estimates is appropriate;
 - whether a state/region's performance is considered on its own or relative to another state/region

Statement of the Problem



- Allocation percentages may need to be updated in the future
- If future updates are considered via addendum, could take several months
- If the Board could make updates via Board action (Board vote), changes could be accomplished more quickly

Statement of the Problem



- Concern about changing management measures too frequently
- Board can set total harvest quota and measures for up to three years
- To avoid management whiplash, specifications could be set for a longer period of time

Timeline



Date	Action
October 2023	Board initiated the Draft Addendum
January 2024	Board provided additional guidance on scope
February – April 2024	Plan Development Team developed Draft Addendum document
May 2024	Board approved Draft Addendum II for public comment
June – July 8, 2024	Public comment period, including public hearings and written comments
August 2024	Board reviews public comment, selects management measures, final approval of Addendum II

Public Comment Period



- 7 written comments (6 individuals and 1 organization)
- 7 public hearings (4 in-person, 3 webinar)
- 37 members of the public attended the hearings, and some attendees provided comments
- Some comments on management options, some on other cobia management topics

Advisory Panel Meeting



- South Atlantic Species AP met via webinar on July 25, 2024 to discuss Draft Addendum II
- 5 AP members in attendance from VA and NC



Management Options

Management Options



- **3.1 Recreational Allocation Framework**
- 3.2 Future Updates to Allocations
- 3.3 Data and Uncertainty in Recreational Landings Evaluations
- 3.4 Overage Response for Recreational Landings Evaluations
- 3.5 Timeline for Setting Rec./Comm. Measures

3.1 Rec. Allocation Framework



- Consider how recreational quota is allocated
 - State-by-state (status quo)
 - Regional
 - Coastwide

3.1 Rec. Allocation Framework



- For state or regional framework, consider data timeframes as basis for allocation
 - 50% 2006-2015 + 50% 2011-2015 (status quo)
 - 100% 2018-2023
 - Data spans 6 years with 5 years used
 - 2020 excluded due to COVID-19 impacts
 - 50% 2014-2023 + 50% 2018-2023
 - Data spans 10 years with 7 years used
 - 2016-2017 excluded due to fishery closures
 - 2020 excluded due to COVID-19 impacts

3.1 Rec. Allocation Framework



Option A-B. State-by-State Allocations

- State-specific target evaluations and state-specific management measures
- Option A is status quo
- Option B considers updated allocation timeframe with more recent data and updated *de minimis* set-aside to account for increased harvest in *de minimis* states in recent years

3.1 Rec Allocation Framework



Data Timeframe	Status Quo	6-Year Average	Weighted 10-Year & 6-Year Average
	50% 2006-2015 + 50% 2011-2015	100% 2018-2023	50% 2014-2023 + 50% 2018-2023
	Option A	Option B1	Option B2
<i>De minimis</i> Set-Aside	1%	5%	5%
Virginia	39.4%	69.2%	64.5%
North Carolina	38.1%	13.2%	17.4%
South Carolina	12.1%	6.5%	7.1%
Georgia	9.4%	6.1%	6.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Potential State Targets Under Current 76,908 Coastwide Rec. Quota



Data Timeframe	Status Quo	6-Year Average	Weighted 10-Year & 6-Year Average	2021-2023 Average Realized Harvest
	50% 2006-2015 + 50% 2011-2015	100% 2018-2023	50% 2014-2023 + 50% 2018-2023	
	Option A	Option B1	Option B2	
<i>De minimis</i> Set-Aside	769	3,845	3,845	3,289
Virginia	30,302	53,208	49,593	59,542
North Carolina	29,302	10,161	13,396	7,976
South Carolina	9,306	5,018	5,426	6,658
Georgia	7,229	4,675	4,647	8,840
Total	76,908	76,908	76,908	

3.1 Rec. Allocation Framework



Option C. Regional Allocations

- Considers allocation by region using allocation timeframe with more recent data
- Eventually establish region-wide size and vessel limit; seasons may vary among states
- When a reduction is needed or when the next stock assessment is completed (whichever comes first) → consider regional measures

3.1 Rec Allocation Framework



Data Timeframe	6-Year Average 100% 2018-2023	Weighted 10-Year & 6-Year Average 50% 2014-2023 + 50% 2018-2023
	Option C1	Option C2
North Region RI-CT-NY-NJ-DE-MD-VA-NC	87.24%	86.65%
South Region 2-State SC-GA	12.76%	13.35%
Total	100%	100%
	Option C3	Option C4
North Region RI-CT-NY-NJ-DE-MD-VA	73.77%	68.69%
South Region 3-State NC-SC-GA	26.23%	31.31%
Total	100%	100%

Potential Region Targets Under Current 76,908 Coastwide Rec. Quota



Data Timeframe	6-Year Average 100% 2018- 2023	Weighted 10- & 6-Year Average 50% 2014-2023 50% 2018-2023	2021-2023 Average Realized Harvest
	Option C1	Option C2	
North Region RI through NC	67,098	66,643	70,808
South Region 2-State SC-GA	9,810	10,265	15,498
Total	76,908	76,908	
	Option C3	Option C4	
North Region RI through VA	56,733	52,825	62,832
South Region 3-State NC-SC-GA	20,175	24,083	23,474
Total	76,908	76,908	

3.1 Rec. Allocation Framework



Option D. Coastwide Target

- Only the coastwide recreational harvest quota (no state or regional allocation)
- Eventually establish coastwide size and vessel limit; seasons may vary among states
- When a reduction is needed or when the next stock assessment is completed (whichever comes first) → consider coastwide measures

3.1 Rec. Allocation Framework



Option D. Coastwide Target

Current Coastwide Rec. Quota: 76,908 fish	<i>2021-2023 Coastwide Average Realized Harvest: 86,306 fish</i>
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3.1 Public Comments



- 1 comment for Option A. status quo, noting high uncertainty, low harvest in northern states where cobia expanding, and overfishing not occurring, so status quo
- 2 comments for Option B. state-by-state with more recent data noting importance of new data, easier to coordinate by state
 - Concern SC would be penalized for conservation action of implementing spawning closure, which decreased harvest and therefore decreased proposed allocation

3.1 Public Comments



- 1 comment for Option C. regional allocation noting uncertainty for how stock will change
- 1 comment for Option D. coastwide management noting reduced MRIP uncertainty at coastwide level and captures coastwide changes in stock distribution

3.1 Public Comments



- 5 commenters did not select an allocation option, but are opposed to increasing Virginia's allocation
 - Negative impacts on the stock giving more quota to Virginia where effort and harvest are higher
 - Would not protect the resource
 - Why should management change in SC/GA which have low impact on the stock
 - Equity concern about reducing quota in states with important cobia fisheries
- 1 commenter noted using 10-yr/6-yr timeframe would incorporate the most years of data

AP Comments



- 4 AP members support Option A status quo state allocations
 - No change while stock assessment is ongoing
 - Overfishing not occurring based on last assessment, so no reason to change before next assessment
 - Management changes now and again after the assessment would be difficult on stakeholders
 - Concern the proposed 2018-2023 basis for allocation is too short of a timeframe given high uncertainty, pulse fishery, impacts of bad weather limiting harvest

AP Comments



- 1 AP member supports state allocations between Option A and Option B
 - Virginia's allocation could increase, but not by the full proposed amount
 - Concern that without state or region allocations, Virginia's harvest could increase even more

Management Options



- 3.1 Recreational Allocation Framework
- **3.2 Future Updates to Allocations**
- 3.3 Data and Uncertainty in Recreational Landings Evaluations
- 3.4 Overage Response for Recreational Landings Evaluations
- 3.5 Timeline for Setting Rec./Comm. Measures

3.2 Updates to Allocations



- Option A. Status Quo. Allocations can only be changed via addendum/amendment process
- Option B. Change via Board Action. Allocations may be changed via Board vote under **two scenarios:**
 - A state loses *de minimis* status and needs their own harvest target factored into the allocation;
 - Harvest estimates for allocation source data are revised (i.e., future MRIP updates)

3.2 Public Comments



- 2 comments for Option A. status quo Board addendum process
 - Future discussions of allocations should have high level of discussion, public participation and input
 - Management process should stay the same given high uncertainty, low harvest in states seeing expansion, and overfishing not occurring

AP Comments



- No specific AP comments on Section 3.2

Management Options



- 3.1 Recreational Allocation Framework
- 3.2 Future Updates to Allocations
- **3.3 Data and Uncertainty in Recreational Landings Evaluations**
- 3.4 Overage Response for Recreational Landings Evaluations
- 3.5 Timeline for Setting Rec./Comm. Measures

3.3 Data and Uncertainty



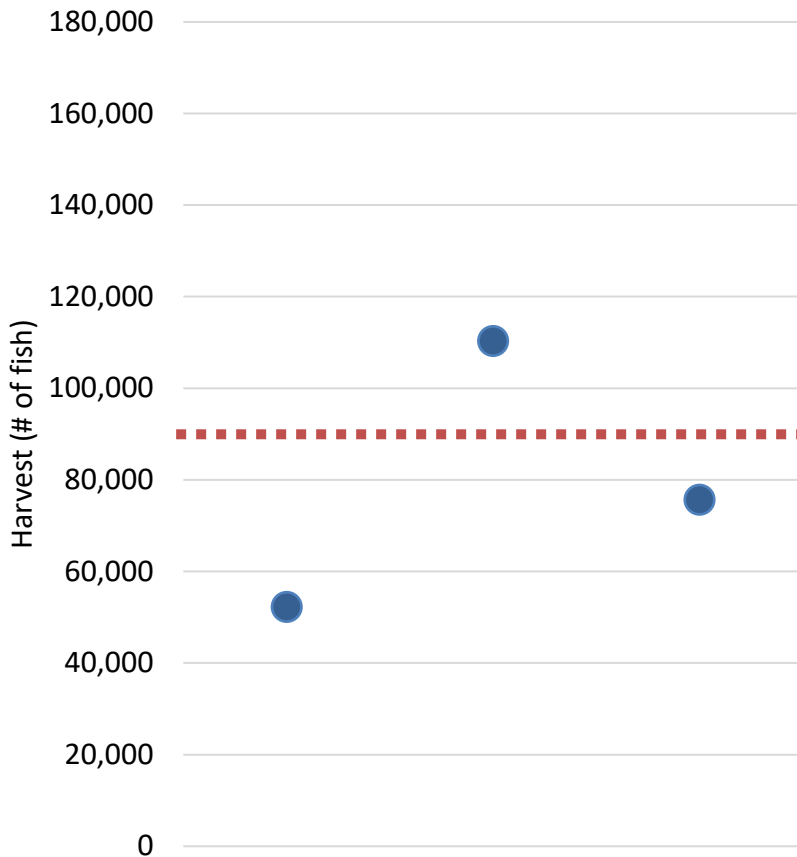
- Option A. Status Quo. Evaluate up to **3-year** rolling average of harvest against target
 - Average of up to 3 years under the same management measures
- Option B. Evaluate up to **5-year** rolling average of harvest against target
 - Average of up to 5 years under the same management measures
 - More years of data given variability and imprecision of harvest estimates

3.3 Data and Uncertainty

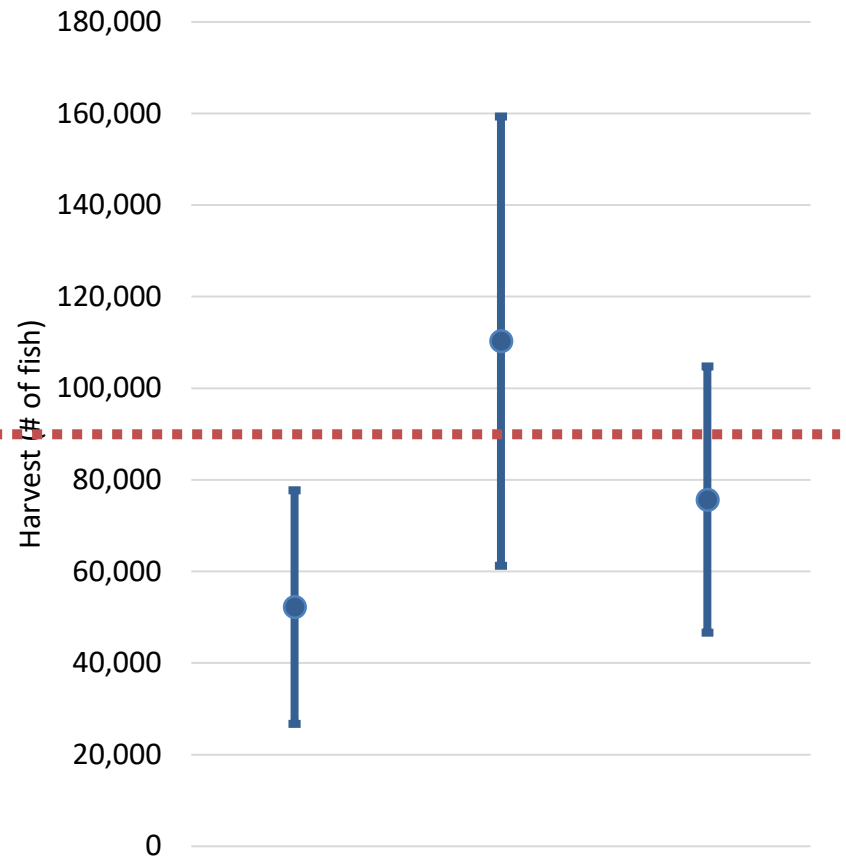


- In the future for a regional or coastwide allocation framework, the Board could vote to switch from using rolling averages to using confidence intervals for harvest target evaluation
- Confidence intervals would more directly account for uncertainty around MRIP harvest point estimates

3.3 Data and Uncertainty



● Average of point estimates vs. target



For regions or coast, could compare range of harvest each year within confidence interval vs. target

3.3 Public Comments



- 2 comments for Option A. 3-year average
 - Not too much time between evaluations; don't want to miss a trend and take action too late
 - Management should stay the same given high uncertainty, low harvest in expansion states, and overfishing not occurring
- 2 comments for Option B. 5-year average
 - More years of data would level out landings, especially if low harvest years due to poor fishing conditions

AP Comments



- 2 AP members support Option B. 5-year average for harvest target evaluations
 - More data are better, could balance years affected by weather conditions limiting effort
- 1 AP member noted support for confidence interval approach

Management Options



- 3.1 Recreational Allocation Framework
- 3.2 Future Updates to Allocations
- 3.3 Data and Uncertainty in Recreational Landings Evaluations
- **3.4 Overage Response for Recreational Landings Evaluations**
- 3.5 Timeline for Setting Rec./Comm. Measures

3.4 Overage Response



- Option A. Status Quo. If a state/region's average harvest exceeds the target, measures must be adjusted to reduce harvest to achieve target.
- Option B. Performance Comparisons. If a state/region's average harvest exceeds the target, a reduction would not be required if:
 - Another state/region is below their target by the same amount and has chosen not to liberalize; AND
 - Average coastwide harvest has not exceeded the coastwide quota

3.4 Public Comments



- 2 comments for Option A. individual state evaluations
 - Accountability by state should be maintained
 - Management should stay the same given high uncertainty, low harvest in expansion states, and overfishing not occurring

AP Comments



- 1 AP member would typically support Option B (no reduction for overage state if another state under and coastwide harvest under), but unsure whether to support for cobia due to uncertainty
 - Logical to account for performance of other states and coastwide harvest, but high uncertainty in determining how close harvest is to the targets

Management Options



- 3.1 Recreational Allocation Framework
- 3.2 Future Updates to Allocations
- 3.3 Data and Uncertainty in Recreational Landings Evaluations
- 3.4 Overage Response for Recreational Landings Evaluations
- **3.5 Timeline for Setting Rec./Comm. Measures**

3.5 Timeline for Setting Measures



- Option A. Status Quo. Specifications (e.g., total harvest quota, rec measures) may be set through Board action for up to **3 years**.
- Option B. Specifications may be set through Board action for up to **5 years**.
 - Reduce frequency of management changes (management ‘whiplash’)
 - Better align with when new stock assessments are available

3.5 Public Comments



- 2 comments for Option A. set measures for up to 3 years at a time
 - Concern 5 years is too long, and assessment not providing much new information since cobia data are limited
 - Management should stay the same given high uncertainty, low harvest in expansion states, and overfishing not occurring
- 4 comments for Option B. set measures for up to 5 years at a time
 - Need for consistency and continuity for regulations
 - Align management with stock assessment data
 - Flexibility to set measures for longer

AP Comments



- 1 AP member supports Option B set measures for up to 5 years
 - Align with stock assessments and match resources required for evaluations to assessment timeline



Questions?