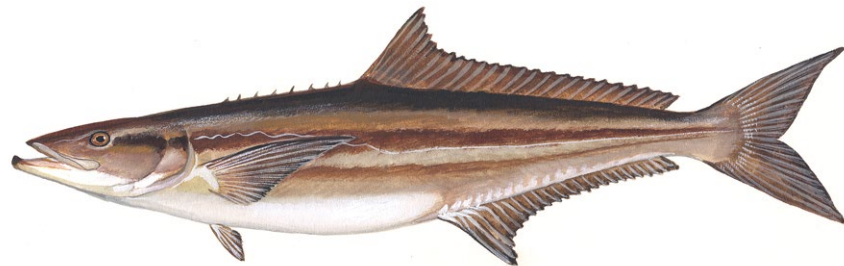




# 2025 Stock Assessment for Atlantic Cobia



Coastal Pelagics Management Board  
October 17, 2023

# Overview



1. Southeast Fisheries Science Center  
Comments and Participation
2. Changes from Previous Assessment and New  
Challenges
3. Timeline

# SEFSC Comments



- Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) sole assessment lead of previous assessment
- SEFSC expressed concerns with upcoming assessment related to:
  - Available data sources
  - Changes in cobia distribution outside of the Southeast region
  - The appropriateness of using the SEDAR process for this assessment

# Stock Assessment Process



- Cobia stock assessment is scheduled for 2025 to be completed through the SEDAR process
- SEFSC will provide a lead analyst
- Assessment will require significant participation from Commission and state staff
- Assessment will operate more like a research track or benchmark stock assessment

# Stock Assessment Challenges



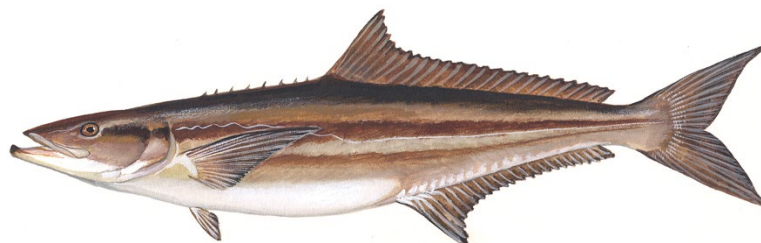
- Cobia stock is expanding northward
- No fishery abundance index available
  - Southeast Region Headboat Survey (SRHS) ended in 2015
- Beaufort Assessment Model (BAM) relies on abundance index and age information
- Exploration of new datasets and model structures or platforms will be needed

# Timeline



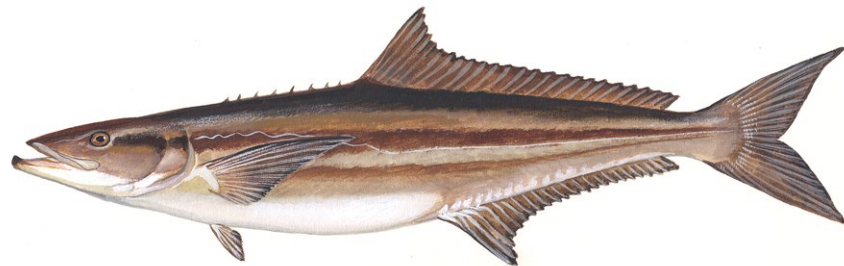
November 2023	Call for data
February 2024	Data scoping webinar
April-June 2024	Data workshop webinars
Early March 2025	Assessment-ready data products due
April-July 2025	AW webinars with SAS (4-5 webinars)
August 2025	SAS establishes final model for management advice
September 2025	Draft stock assessment report submitted & review final model runs
October 2025	Address review issues & final report
<b>Early 2026</b>	Report to Coastal Pelagics Management Board

# Questions?





# **Atlantic Cobia Recreational Management Measures: 2024 Fishing Year Recommendations**



**Coastal Pelagics Management Board  
October 17, 2023**



# Overview



1. Specifications Process
2. Technical Committee Report
3. Technical Committee Recommendations

# August 2023 Board Motion



Move to set the 2024-2026 total harvest quota at the status quo level of **80,112 fish**. This results in a **recreational quota of 76,908 fish** and a **commercial quota of 73,116 lbs.**

# Evaluating State Harvest - Process



## Amendment 1 – Section 4.3.5

Recreational landings will be evaluated against state recreational harvest targets at the same time as the specification process. Recreational landings for each non-de minimis state will be evaluated against that state's target as an average of annual landings. **The timeframe for this average will only include years with the same recreational season and vessel limit...**

2024 Recreational Measures Timeframe → 2021-2022

# Evaluating State Harvest - Process



## Amendment 1 – Section 4.3.5

If a state's **averaged** recreational landings exceed its annual recreational harvest target, that state must adjust its recreational vessel limit or season to reduce harvest, such that future annual landings would be expected to achieve the state recreational harvest target.

States reporting a consistent (i.e., consecutive) under-harvest during an **evaluation time period for a minimum of 2 years** may present a plan to extend seasons or increase vessel limits, if desired, to allow increased harvests that will not exceed the harvest target.

# Recreational Soft Target Performance



State	Soft Target	2021 Landings	2022 Landings	2-Year Average	2024-2026 Options
Georgia	7,229	8,510	6,641	7,575.5	Restriction
South Carolina	9,306	8,858	6,988	7,923	Status Quo or Liberalization
North Carolina	29,302	10,970	12,330	11,650	Status Quo or Liberalization
Virginia	30,302	57,135	39,668	48,401.5	Restriction
De Minimis	769	5,334	4,173	4,753.5	N/A
Total	76,908	90,807	69,800	80,303.5	N/A

\*Table represents landings and targets in numbers of fish

# August 2023 Board Motion



Move to task the Cobia Technical Committee with determining the impacts of status quo coastwide recreational management measures for the 2024 fishing year.

# Technical Committee Report

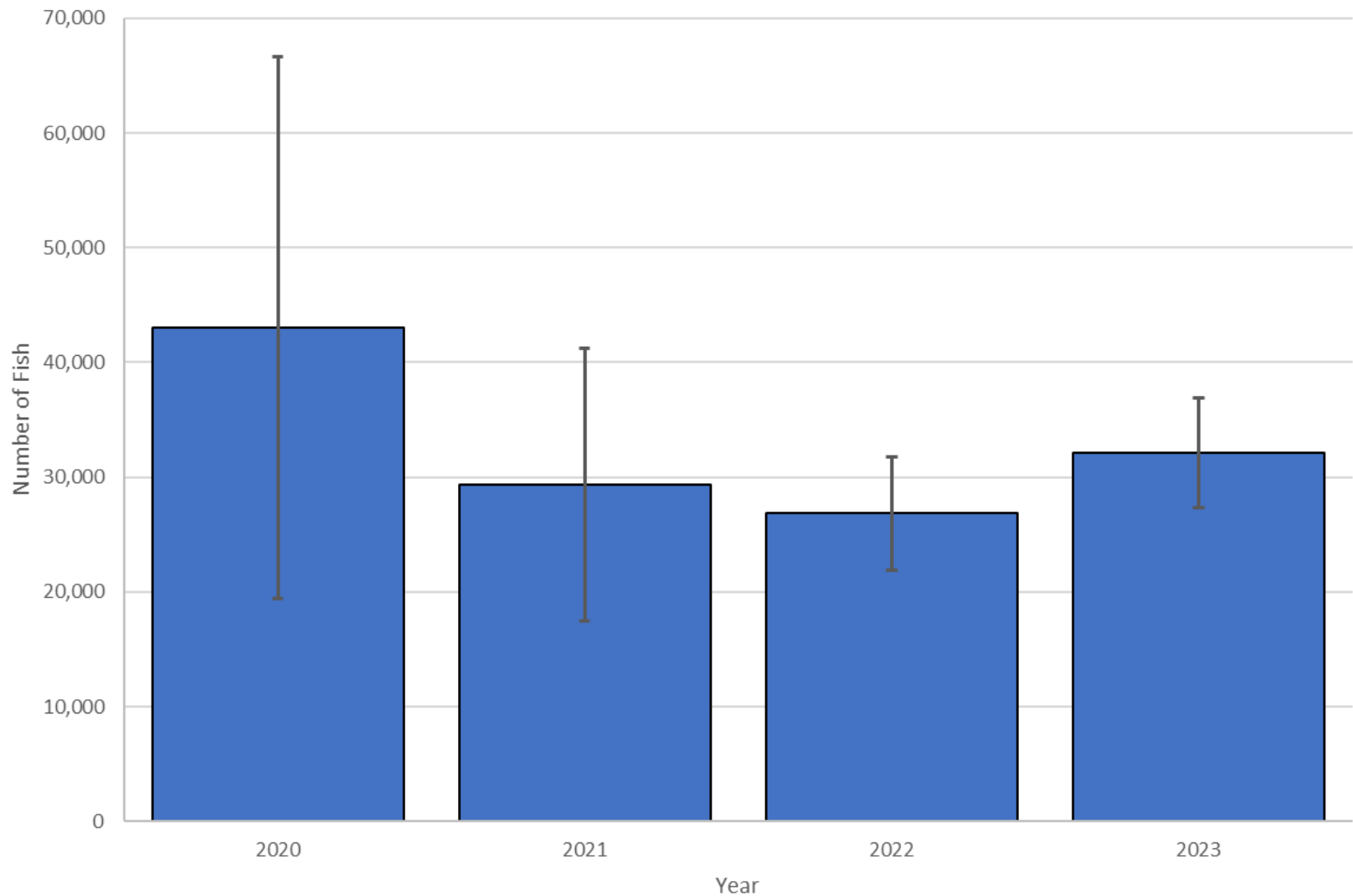


- Met in September 2023
- Reviewed Averaged 2021-2022 harvest data
  - 2021 landings 13,899 fish *over* coastwide quota
  - 2022 landings 7,108 fish *below* coastwide quota
  - Avg. 2021-2022 landings 3,396 fish *above* coastwide quota
  - Reasonable probability that coastwide quota may not be exceeded, on average, due to state overages balanced by underages
- Reviewed preliminary waves 1-3 2023 harvest data

# Coastwide 2023 Waves 1-3 Harvest

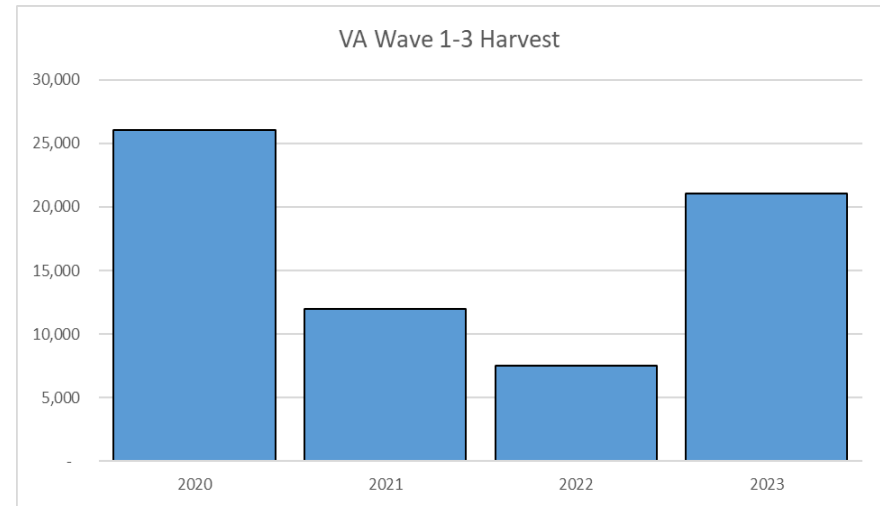
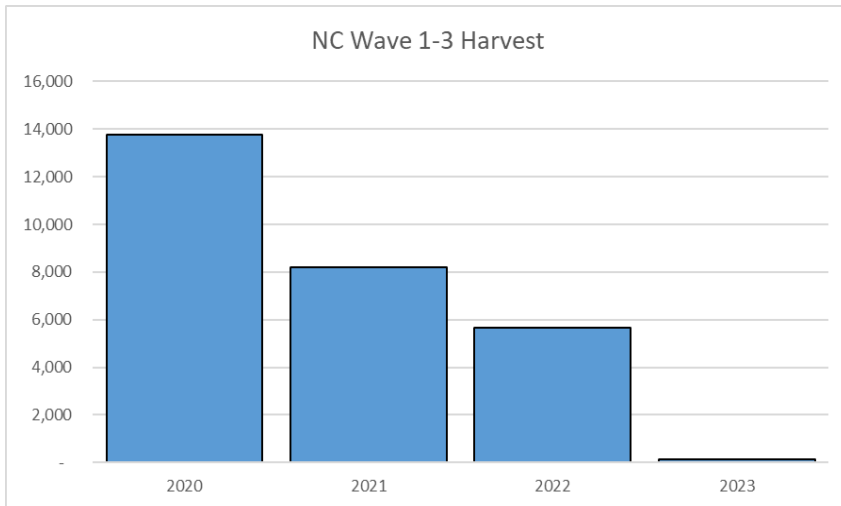
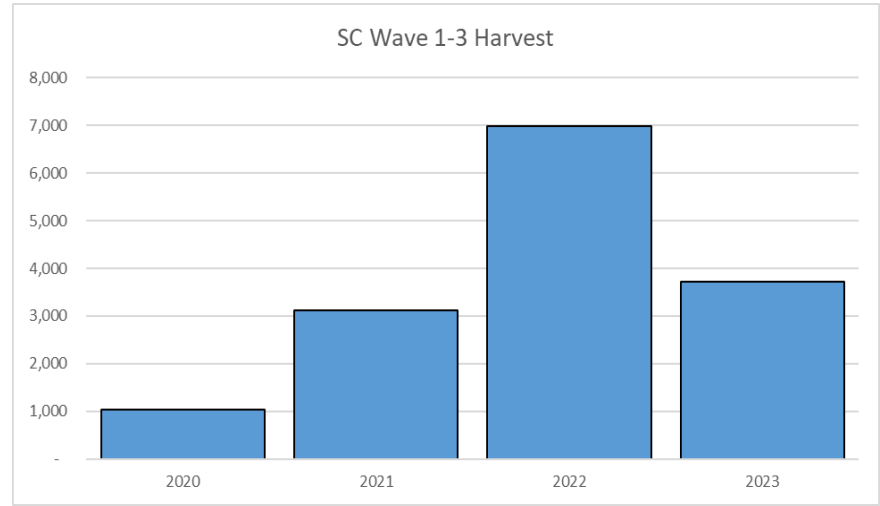
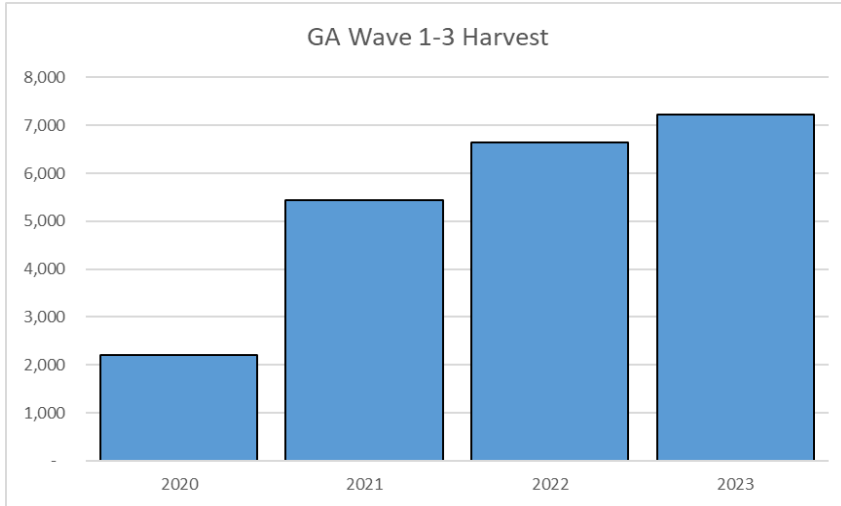


GA-North Cobia Harvest Wave 1-3





# 2023 Waves 1-3 Harvest by State



# Possible 2023 Harvest



- Estimated possible range of 2023 full year harvest estimates for non-*de minimis* states
  - Linear regressions by state based on historical waves 1-3 harvest and final harvest estimate
  - For NC & VA, explored uncertainty by using the min, mean, & max harvest increase observed over last 5 years
  - **Caveat: Only includes non-*de minimis* states!**

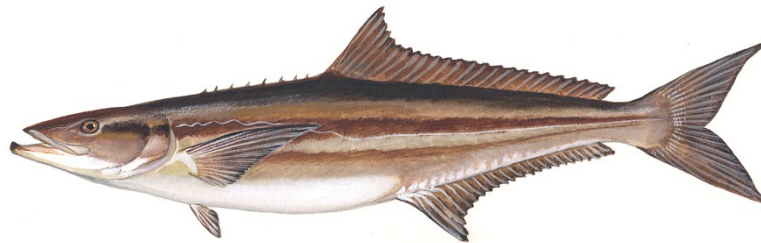
	Harvest Estimate (# of fish)	Difference from Soft Target (# of fish)
<b>2023 Soft Target GA-VA</b>	<b>76,139</b>	<b>N/A</b>
2023 Linear Reg. Estimate	64,958	-11,181
2023 Minimum Estimate	59,722	-16,417
2023 Mean Estimate	75,835	-304
2023 Maximum Estimate	86,888	10,749

# TC Recommendation



- Uncertainties when considering status quo regulations in 2024
  - 2023 full year harvest estimates based on historical fishery performance
  - Incorporation of Covid years in the 2021-2022 harvest target evaluations & if they're representative of future harvest
  - Potential changes in catch and effort estimates in 2026 from the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey (FES) pilot study
- **TC recommends status quo recreational measures for 2024 due to reasonably low probability of exceeding the coastwide recreational quota as a result of status quo measures**

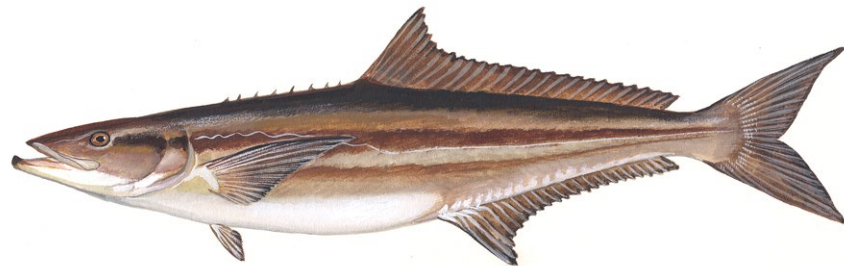
# Questions?



***Cobia Technical Committee recommendation: Maintain status quo state waters recreational management measures for Atlantic Cobia for the 2024 fishing year.***



# Technical Committee Report: Recent Trends in Cobia Harvest and Catch



Coastal Pelagics Management Board  
October 17, 2023

# Overview



1. Board Motion and Current Recreational Harvest Allocation
2. Trends in Coastwide Harvest and Catch
3. Trends in Regional Harvest and Catch
4. Tagging Data
5. Technical Committee Recommendations

# August 2023 Board Motion



**Move to task the Cobia Technical Committee to develop a fishery review that characterizes recent trends in state and regional landings compared to their harvest targets, including de minimis landings.** The results of this review will inform a future addendum to be implemented for 2025 that considers recreational allocations, de minimis, and any other issues the Board identifies. It is the intent to initiate this addendum either at the Commission's Annual Meeting or the 2024 Winter Meeting

# Recreational Harvest Targets

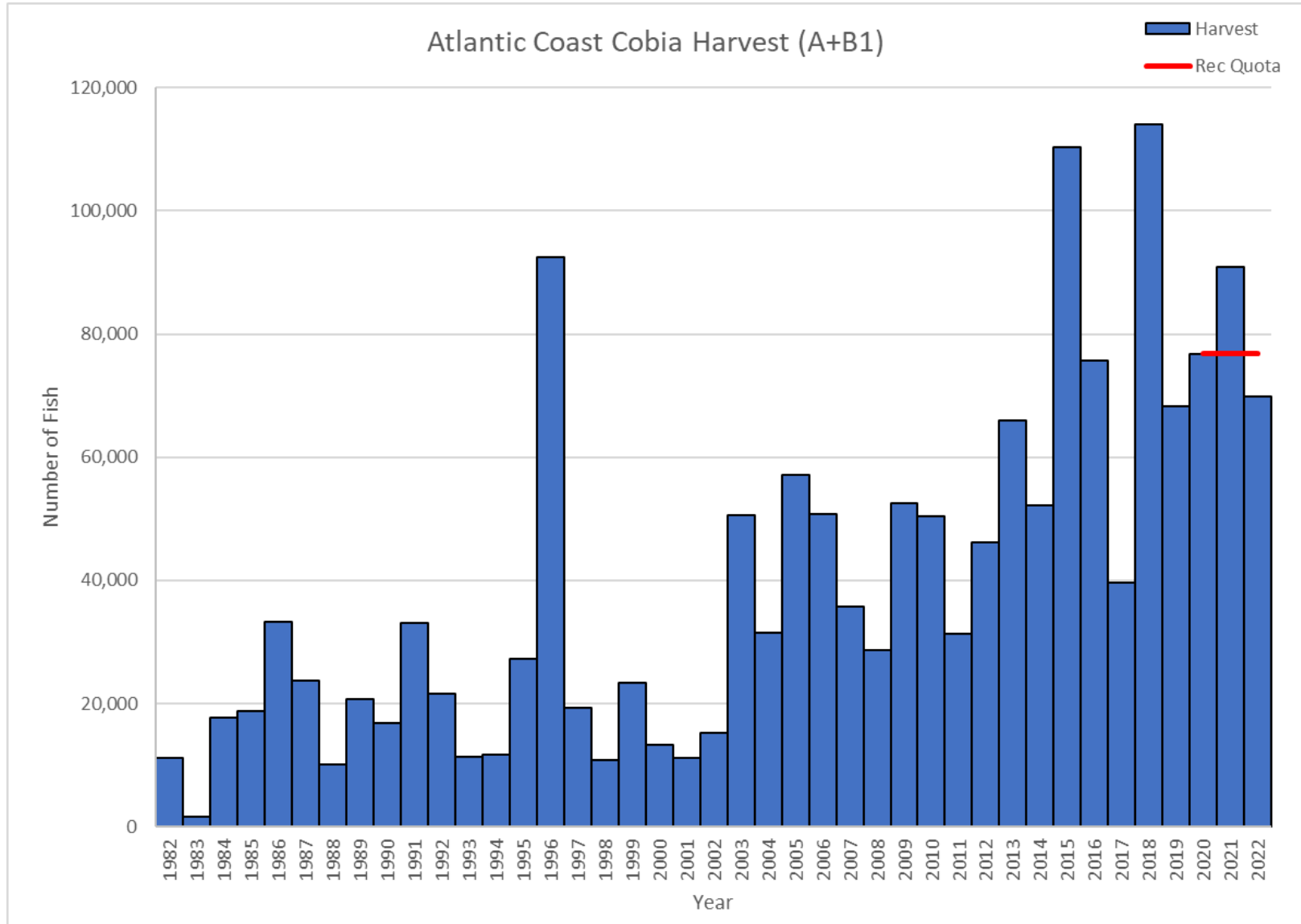


- Recreational allocations based on states' percentages of coastwide historical landings in numbers of fish:
  - 50% of the 10-year average landings from 2006-2015
  - 50% of the 5-year average landings from 2011-2015

<b>State</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Current Rec Target</b>
VA	39.4%	30,302 fish
NC	38.1%	29,302 fish
SC	12.1%	9,306 fish
GA	9.4%	7,229 fish
De minimis	1.0%	769 fish
Total	100%	76,908 fish



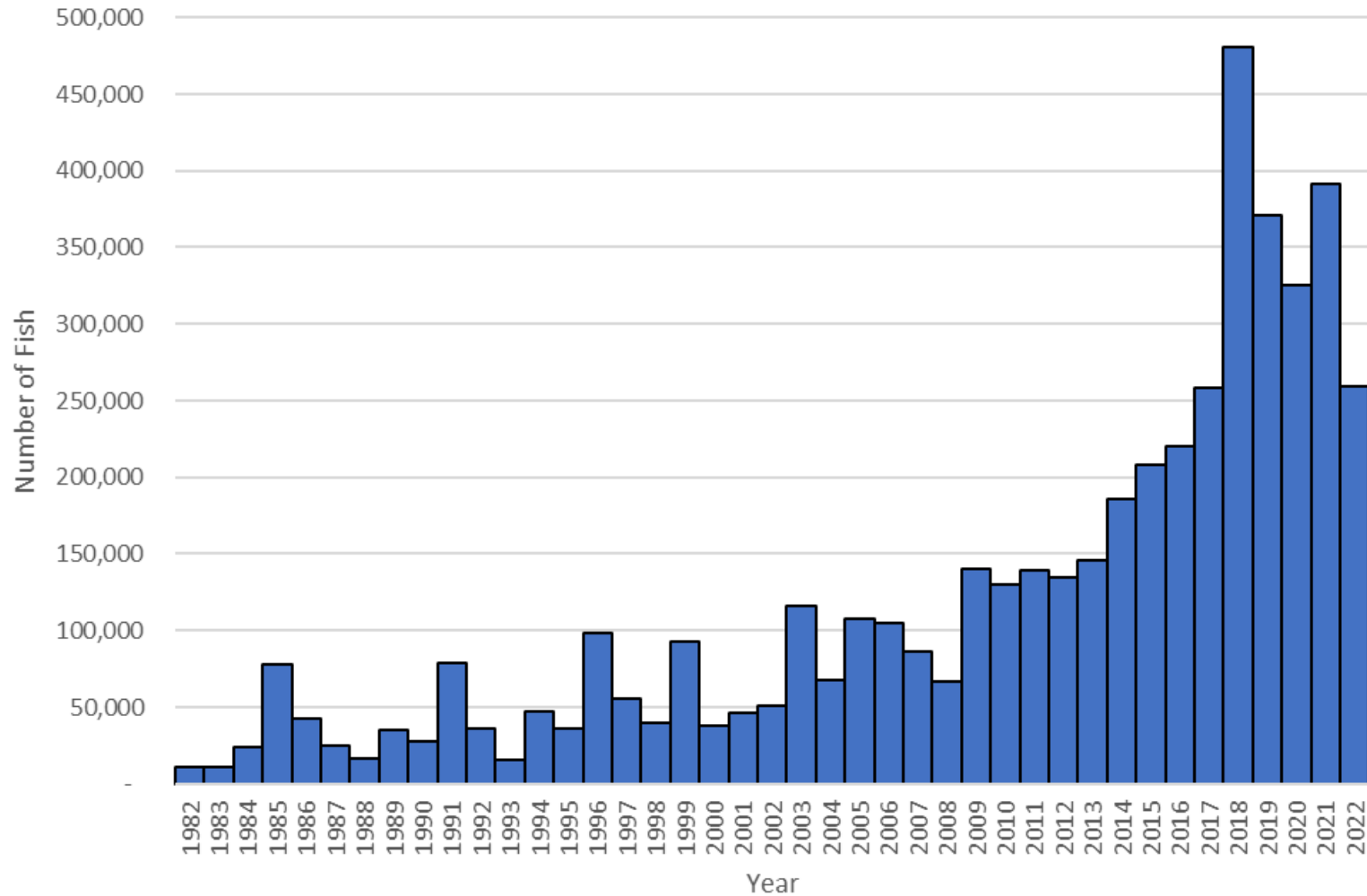
# Coastwide Recreational Harvest



# Coastwide Recreational Catch



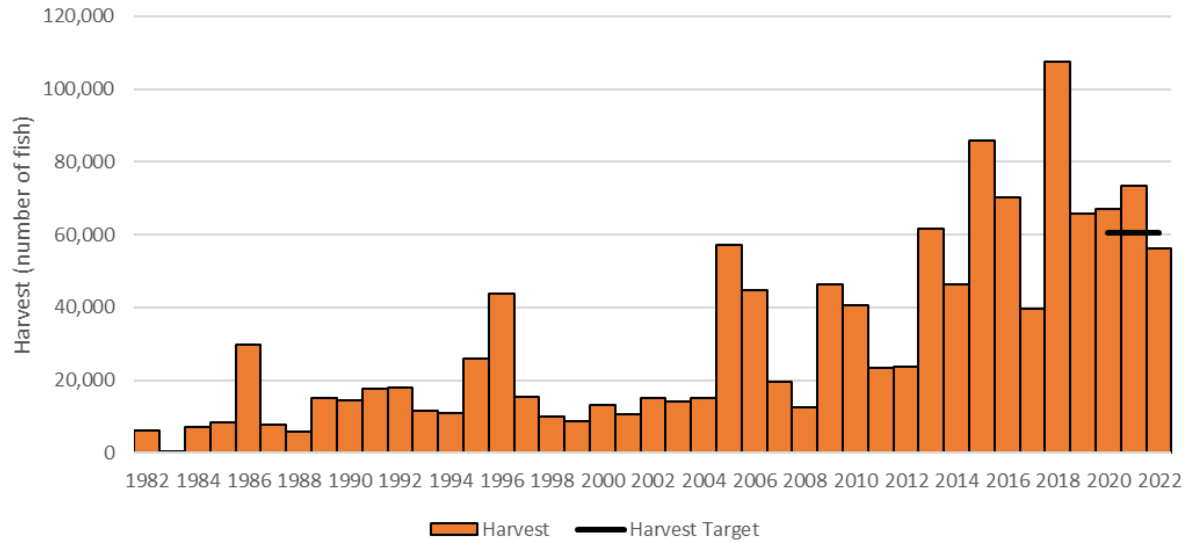
Atlantic Coast Cobia Catch (A+B1+B2)



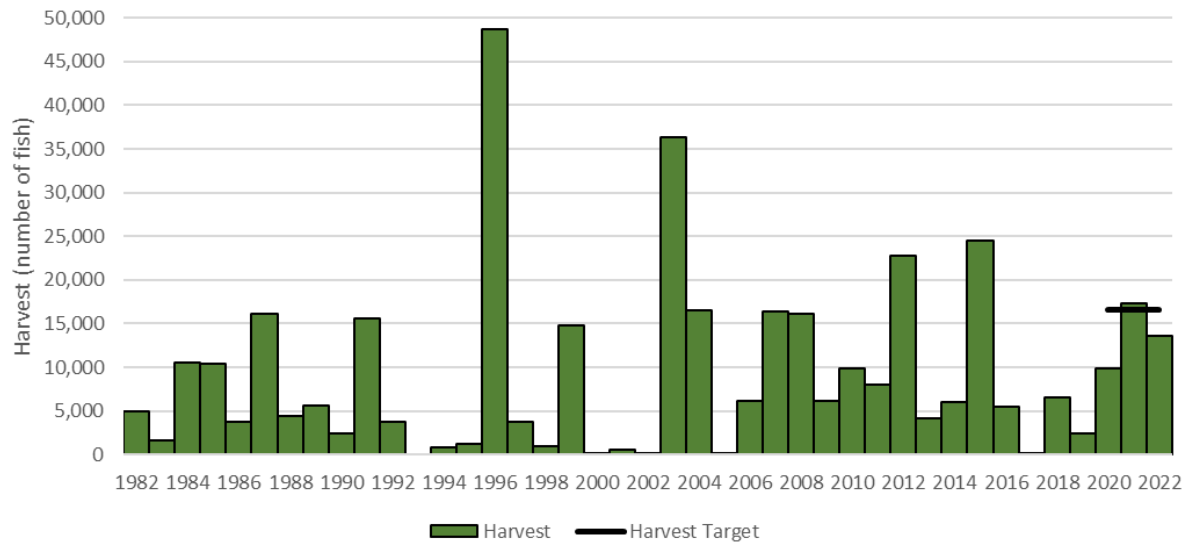
# Two Region Rec Harvest



### NC-North Regional Harvest



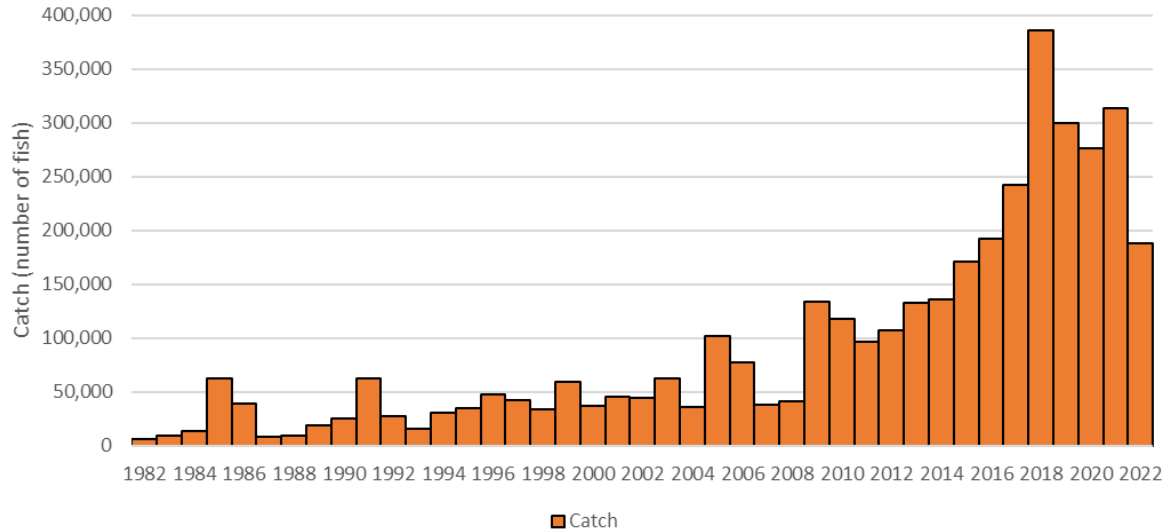
### SC-GA Regional Harvest



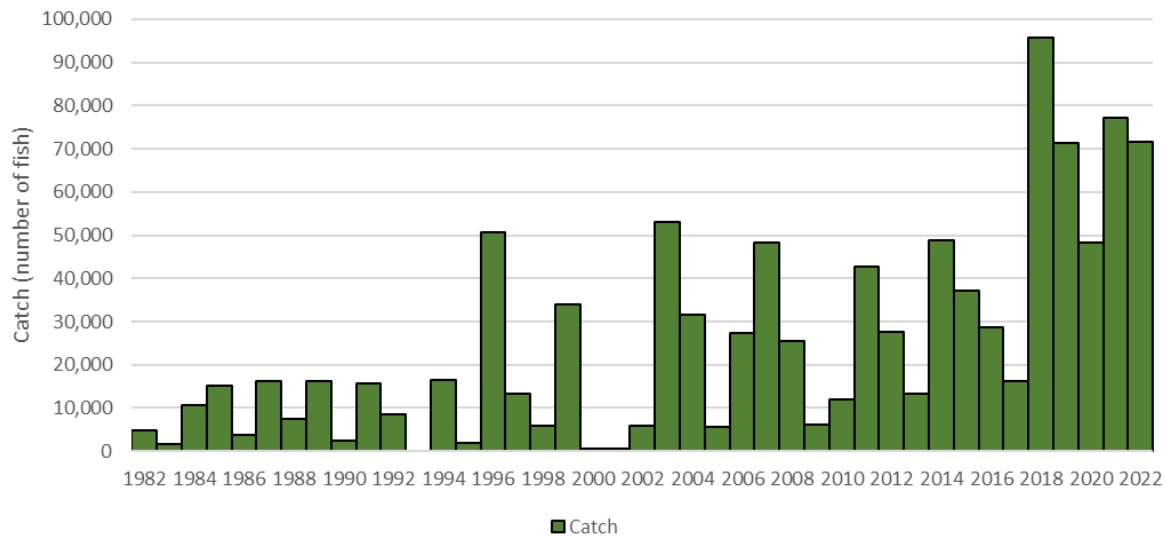
# Two Region Rec Catch



### NC-North Regional Catch



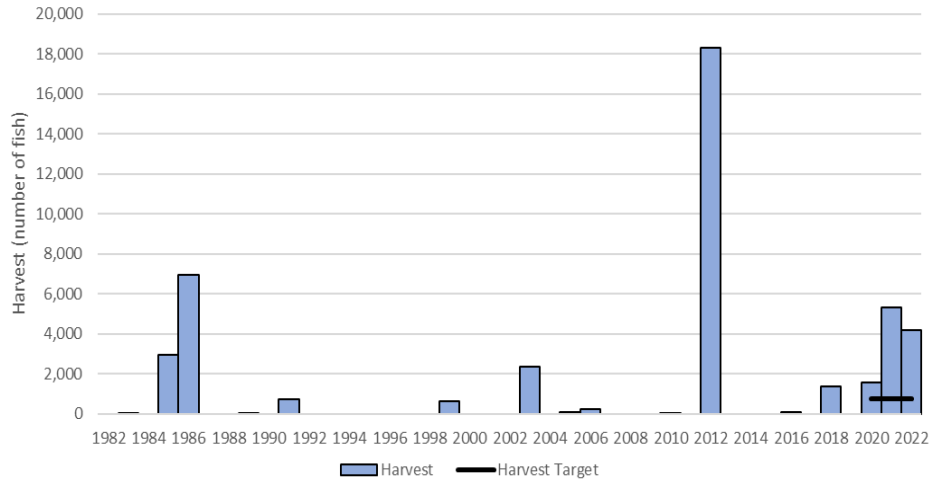
### SC-GA Regional Catch



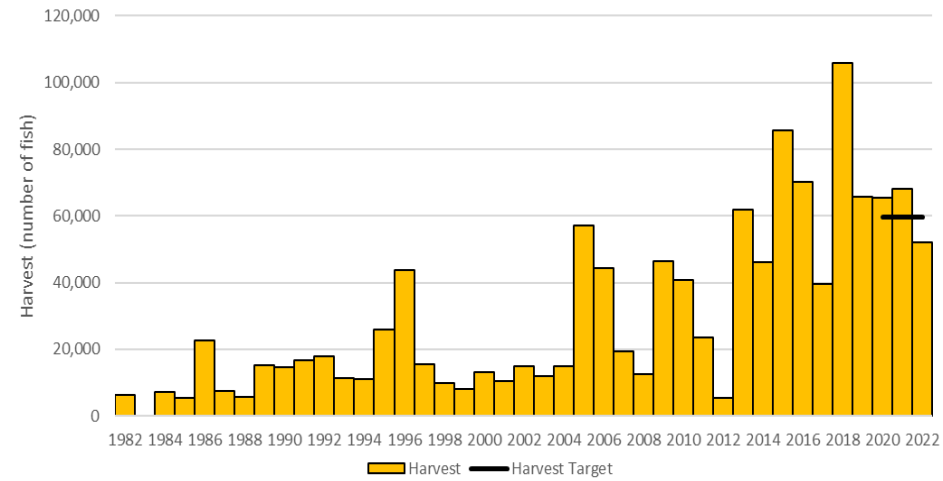
# Three Region Rec Harvest



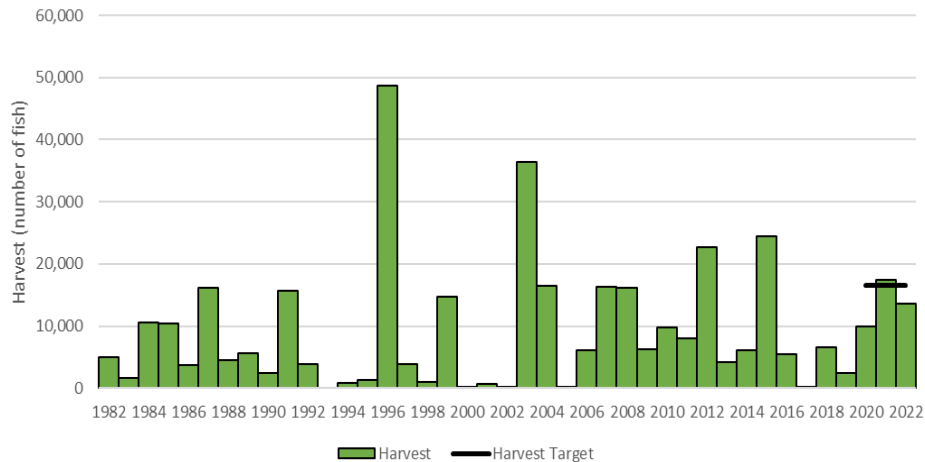
### MD-North Regional Harvest



### NC-VA Regional Harvest



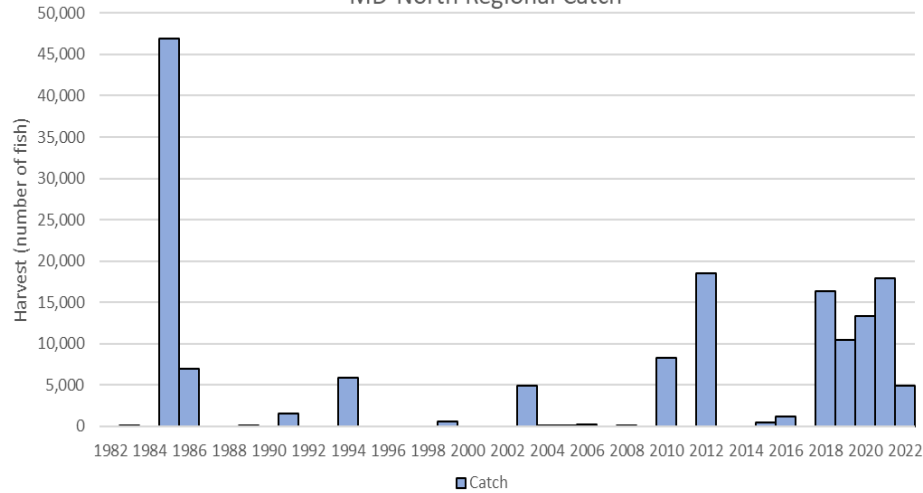
### SC-GA Regional Harvest



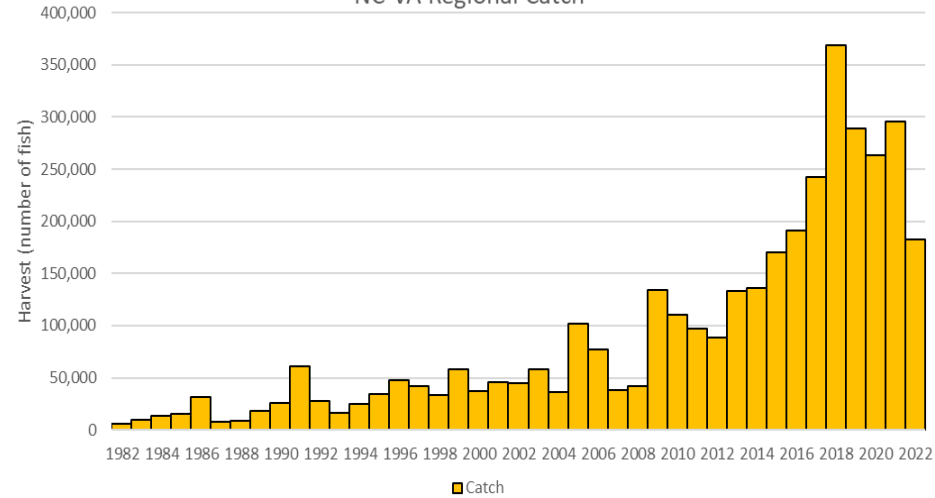
# Three Region Rec Catch



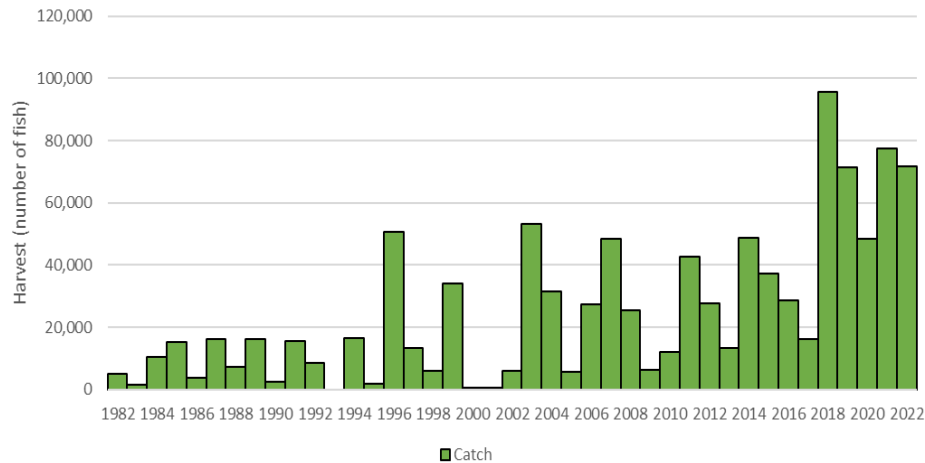
### MD-North Regional Catch



### NC-VA Regional Catch



### SC-GA Regional Catch



# Cobia Tagging Data



- Reviewed mainly conventional tagging data
  - Some acoustic & satellite tagging data available but paper is under review for publication
- Showed movement of fish between NC & VA
- Showed movements of fish north of VA and south into FL
- TC interested in re-examining the boundary between the two stocks
  - Acknowledgement of likely mixing zone in NE FL
  - Additional satellite and acoustic tagging data now available that wasn't before
  - Preference for efforts either before or as an initial step of the next stock assessment

# TC Recommendation



- Based on recent trends in state, regional, and coastwide harvest and cobia tagging data, the TC recommends the Board take action to address recreational reallocation for Atlantic cobia.
- However, timing of Board action should consider:
  - Timing of the upcoming MRIP FES follow up study
  - Potential re-examination of the cobia management boundary either before or during the upcoming stock assessment



# Questions?

