



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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South Atlantic States Schedule Public Hearings on Cobia Public Information Document

Arlington, VA – The South Atlantic states of North Carolina through Florida have scheduled their hearings to gather public comment on the Public Information Document (PID) for the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Cobia. The details of the scheduled hearings follow.

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

December 6, 2016; 6 PM
2600 Washington Ave, 4th Floor
Newport News, Virginia 23607
Contact: [Joe Cimino](#) at 757.247.2236

North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries

December 8, 2016; 6 PM
Doubletree by Hilton Atlantic Beach
2717 West Fort Macon Road
Atlantic Beach, North Carolina
Contact: [Michelle Duval](#) at 252.808.8011

December 15, 2016; 5 PM
Dare County Government Administration Building
Room 168
954 Marshall C. Collins Drive
Manteo, North Carolina
Contact: [Michelle Duval](#) at 252.808.8011

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

December 12, 2016; 6 PM
Port Royal Sound Maritime Center (adjacent to
Edgar C Glenn boat ramp on the Chechessee
River)
310 Okatie Highway
Okatie, South Carolina
Contact: [Mel Bell](#) at 843.953.9007

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

December 14, 2016; 6 PM
New Smyrna City Hall
City Commission Chambers (accessible via the
South entrance from Julia Street)
210 Sams Avenue
New Smyrna Beach, Florida
Contact: [Jim Estes](#) at 850.617.9622

As the first step in the FMP development process, the PID provides stakeholders with an opportunity to inform the Commission about changes observed in the fishery and provide feedback on potential management measures as well as any additional issues that should be included in the Draft FMP. Specifically, the PID seeks comment on the management unit; goals and objectives of the plan;

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.

commercial and recreational measures; coastwide, regional or state-by-state measures; and other issues.

This action responds to a request by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) for the Commission to consider joint or complementary management of the resource in light of the significant overage of the 2015 recreational annual catch limit (ACL) and the impact of those overages to state management. Further, during most recent years, a majority of recreational landings of cobia along the Atlantic coast occurs in state waters. The Commission considered this request in August and agreed to move forward with the development of a complementary FMP.

Widely distributed throughout the western Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, cobia are managed as two distinct groups – the Gulf Migratory Group and the Atlantic Migratory Group. The Atlantic Migratory Group, which range from New York to Georgia, is managed by the SAFMC. The east coast of Florida falls under the Gulf Migratory Group. The SAFMC manages the east coast of Florida sub-ACL which is set by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. Recreational landings of the Atlantic Migratory Group in 2015 were approximately 1.5 million pounds, 145% over the ACL, resulting in a June 20, 2016 closure of the fishery by NOAA Fisheries. Commercial cobia landings in 2015 were 83,148 pounds, 38% over the ACL. Late landings reports in 2015 precluded a timely closure of the commercial fishery.

Concerns were expressed by some states whose recreational seasons would have been significantly reduced by federal waters closure due to the 2015 quota overage. Instead of following the federal closure, several states developed alternate management strategies to reduce economic impacts to their state fisheries which resulted in differing regulations for federal and state water fishing. An intent of the complementary Cobia FMP is to provide the states the flexibility to respond to changes in the fishery and stock that meet their state fisheries needs without impacting federal fishermen while meeting the goals and objectives of the FMP.

Stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on the PID either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. The PID can be obtained at http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/CobiaPID_PublicComment.pdf or via the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org, under *Public Input*. Public comment will be accepted until **5 PM (EST) on January 6, 2017** and should be forwarded to Dr. Louis Daniel, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at ldaniel@asmfc.org (Subject line: Cobia PID).

The Management Board will meet at the Commission's 2017 Winter Meeting to review and consider public comment and provide direction to staff for items to be included in the Draft FMP. For more information, please contact Louis Daniel at ldaniel@asmfc.org or 252.342.1478.

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