



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ASMFC South Atlantic Board Releases Atlantic Cobia Draft Addendum I for Public Comment

Public Hearing Webinars Scheduled for Late September/Early October

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s South Atlantic States/Federal Fisheries Management Board has approved for public comment Draft Addendum I to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia. The Draft Addendum was initiated in response to the 2020 quota, which is based on the results of the 2020 Atlantic cobia benchmark stock assessment. The benchmark assessment incorporated new recreational catch estimates, which were about two times higher than those previously used. The Draft Addendum considers options to change the allocation between commercial and recreational sectors, taking into consideration the change in recreational estimates. Currently 92% of the total quota is allocated to the recreational fishery, and 8% is allocated to the commercial fishery under Amendment 1.

The Commission and its member states from Maryland to Georgia will be conducting a series of public hearings to gather public input on Draft Addendum I. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic all hearings will be conducted via webinar, with some hearings state-specific and others regionally-focused. Webinar links and call-in information are below. Please note that in order to comment during the hearings you will need to use your computer or download the GoToWebinar app for your phone (the phone numbers provided below are for listening only). Additional details on participating in the webinar can be found later in this release; this information is particularly important for those that have not used the GoToWebinar platform before.

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

September 22; 6 - 8 PM

Webinar link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6006408131526490128>

Call in listen only*: 877.309.2074; access code: 200.660.341

Contact: [Somers Smott](#) at 757.247.2004

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 diadromous species.

**Regional Hearing 1 - Delaware Department of Natural and Environmental Control,
Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Potomac River Fisheries Commission**

September 24; 6 - 8 PM

Webinar link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2974481728190309389>

Call in listen only*: 877.309.2074; access code: 795.844.922

DE Contact: [John Clark](#) at 302.739.9108; MD Contact: [Lynn Fegley](#) at 443.223.9279 and
PRFC Contact: [Marty Gary](#) at 804.456.6935

Regional Hearing 2 – South Carolina and Georgia Departments of Natural Resources

September 29; 6 - 8 PM

Webinar link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4934600898236685324>

Call in listen only*: 877.309.2071; access code: 172.588.707

SC Contact: [Mel Bell](#) at 843.953.9007

GA Contact: [Doug Haymans](#) at 912.264.7218

North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries

October 1; 6 - 8 PM

Webinar link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6597157037434050572>

Call in listen only*: 877.309.2071; access code: 453.635.352

Contact: [Chris Batsavage](#) at 252.241.2995

* Please note: Those joining by phone only, will be limited to listening to the presentation but will not be able to provide input during the hearing. In those cases, you can send your comments to staff via email, US mail, or fax at any time during the public comment period.

The Draft Addendum proposes strategies that could reduce commercial percent allocations, without reducing the commercial quota below its 2019 level (50,000 pounds). Options for lower commercial allocations were proposed because of a large increase in the 2020-2022 total quota, which resulted in a larger commercial quota (as 8% of the total). The higher overall quota is due, in part, to the increase in recreational catch estimates that resulted from the 2018 calibration of recreational data to the new, mail-based Fishing Effort Survey conducted by the Marine Recreational Information Program. The updated recreational data were incorporated into the 2020 assessment, which estimated a greater abundance of fish than the previous assessment and provided the basis for the 2020-2022 total quota.

The Draft Addendum additionally proposes changes to the calculation of the commercial trigger (determines whether an in-season coastwide commercial closure occurs) and *de minimis* measures (applied to states with relatively small commercial or recreational harvest). The current trigger calculation method is dependent on recent harvests meeting the current or upcoming quota. Proposed changes to the commercial trigger would allow this trigger to be calculated based on harvests in the most recent 5 years, regardless of the size of the harvests relative to a quota. Proposed changes to *de minimis* measures include consideration of a cap on the amount of the commercial quota that can be set aside to account for harvest in commercial *de minimis* states as well as increasing the alternative recreational minimum size limit, which can be adopted by recreational *de minimis* states that choose not to adopt the measures of a neighboring or nearest non-*de minimis* state.

Webinar Instructions

You can join the webinar from your computer, tablet or smartphone. If you are new to GoToWebinar, you can download the software ([click here](#)) or via the App store under GoToWebinar. We recommend you register for the hearing well in advance of the hearing since GoToWebinar will provide you with a link to test your device's compatibility with the webinar. If you find your device is not compatible, please contact the Commission at info@asmfc.org (subject line: GoToWebinar help) and we will try to get you connected. We also strongly encourage participants to **use the computer voice over internet (VoIP)** so you can ask questions and provide input at the hearing. Those joining by phone only, will be limited to listening to the presentation but will not be able to provide input during the hearing. In those cases, you can send your comments to staff via email, US mail, or fax at any time during the public comment period.

The Commission will also post a recording of the hearing presentation on the Commission's YouTube page so that stakeholders may watch the presentation and submit comment at any time during the comment process. This recording will be available mid-September; a subsequent press release will announce the availability of the recording.

Draft Addendum I is available at

http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/CobiaDraftAddI_PublicComment_September2020.pdf or via the Commission's website at <http://www.asmfc.org/about-us/public-input>. Recreational anglers, members of the commercial fishing industry, and other stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on Draft Addendum I either by participating in the public hearing webinars or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until **5 PM (EST) on October 6, 2020** and should be sent to Savannah Lewis, FMP Coordinator, at 1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, Virginia 22201; 703.842.0741 (fax) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Cobia Draft Addendum I). For more information, please contact Toni Kerns at tkerns@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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