



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

ASMFC Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
703.842.0740

ASMFC South Atlantic Board Releases Atlantic Cobia Draft Amendment 1 Public Information Document for Public Comment

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board approved for public comment the Public Information Document (PID) for Draft Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia (Atlantic cobia). As the first step in the amendment process, the document seeks input from stakeholders and those interested in Atlantic cobia about changes observed in the fishery/resource and potential management measures.

Draft Amendment 1 was initiated in anticipation of removal of Atlantic cobia from the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils’ (SAFMC and GMFMC, respectively) Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources (CMP FMP). Both Councils approved removal of Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP earlier this year, and this action is now pending review by the Secretary of Commerce. If approved by the Secretary of Commerce, there would no longer be a federal management plan for Atlantic cobia, and the Commission would become the sole management body for this stock.

The PID outlines three main issues: recommended management for federal waters, a harvest specification process, and biological monitoring requirements. If Atlantic cobia is removed from the CMP FMP, the Commission will need to develop management measures to be recommended for implementation by NOAA Fisheries in federal waters, since a portion of the fishery occurs offshore. Additionally, several management measures within the Interstate FMP are dependent upon the CMP FMP, meaning that these measures will need to be redefined to continue management in state waters.

A harvest specification process would allow the Board to periodically (e.g. annually or biennially) set certain management measures through a Board vote without having to gather input via public hearings as done through an addendum or amendment process. This would expedite the Board’s decision-making process for measures where states commonly gather public input through their administrative process. The Board and members of the public have expressed a desire to change some of the current FMP management measures, and this could be accomplished through a harvest specification process.

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.

Finally, biological monitoring programs have been recommended for Board consideration by the Cobia Plan Development Team and Technical Committee. Information obtained by such programs, like ages or lengths, can provide important information beyond harvest estimates to managers as they make decisions.

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/CobiaDraftAmd1PID_PublicComment.pdf or via the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org, under *Public Input*. Public comment will be accepted until **5 PM (EST) on October 4, 2018** and should be forwarded to Dr. Michael Schmidtke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Cobia PID). If your organization is planning to release an action alert related to the Amendment 1 PID, please contact Michael Schmidtke at mschmidtke@asmfc.org prior to its release.

It is anticipated the states of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and potentially Maryland or Delaware will be conducting public hearings in September 2018. A subsequent press release will provide the details of those hearings. The Management Board will meet at the Commission's 2018 Annual Meeting in October to review and consider public comment and provide direction to staff for items to be included in Draft Amendment 1.

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