



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • 703.842.0741 (fax) • www.asmfmc.org

MEMORANDUM

May 20, 2020

To: South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board
From: Cobia Technical Committee
RE: Recommendations for Atlantic Cobia Commercial Trigger

At the February 2020 ASMFC meeting, the South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board (Board) approved the Atlantic cobia 2020-2022 total harvest quota of 80,112 fish, resulting in a commercial quota of 146,232 pounds. The Cobia Technical Committee (TC) attempted to calculate a recommended commercial trigger percentage, as specified in Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia (Amendment 1) but encountered an issue. Amendment 1 states:

The number of days past the trigger percentage until a closure occurs will be calculated as the average number of days from the previous three years for commercial landings to go from the trigger percentage to the full commercial quota, less any *de minimis* set aside. The trigger shall be updated as part of the specification process, using similar methodology, to allow the states at least 30 days' notice of an impending commercial closure.

From this language, the calculation of a trigger percentage is dependent on recent commercial harvests reaching the commercial quota. However, if recent harvests are low or the quota is significantly increased (as happened in February), the trigger percentage is not able to be calculated.

The TC discussed this issue and recommends calculation of the 2020 commercial trigger level and future commercial triggers in the following way:

1. Calculation of daily commercial harvest rates for non-*de minimis* states based on harvests from the previous 5 years. Daily harvest rates for each year would be estimated as the annual commercial harvest divided by the number of days from the first date of harvest to the last date of harvest in that year.
2. Average the 5 annual rates to estimate the daily rate for the entire time period.
3. Subtract 30 days' worth of harvest (30 times the average daily harvest rate) from the non-*de minimis* portion of the commercial quota.

These methods would provide a level of harvest by pounds or a percentage of the quota that could be used to provide the 30 days' notice prior to a closure required by Amendment 1. Additionally, the use of 5 years of harvest data could better account for variability in year-to-year harvest rates than a narrower three-year harvest window.

M20-055

As Draft Addendum I to Amendment 1 is currently in development and has not yet been considered for public comment, the TC recommends the described changes to the commercial trigger calculation be included in the Draft Addendum prior to its review for public comment at the next Board meeting in August.