

Due to technical issues, the proceedings of the South Atlantic State/Federal Management Board were not recorded. The following press releases, meeting summary and motions are provided in lieu of the Board’s recorded/transcribed proceedings.

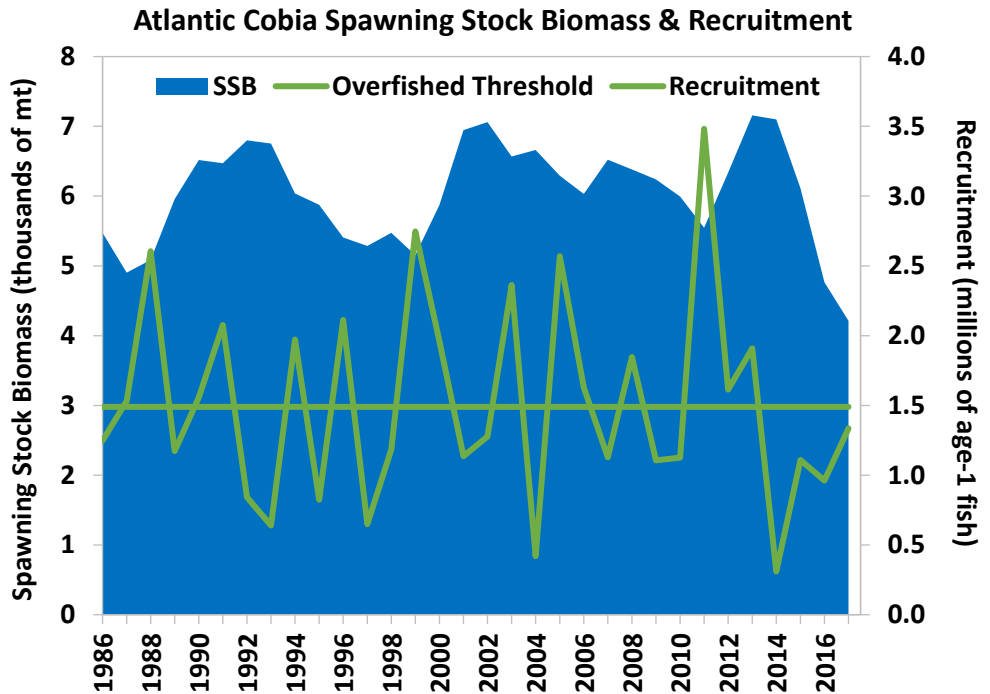
SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 5, 2020)

Press Releases

Atlantic Cobia Benchmark Stock Assessment Finds Resource Not Overfished Nor Experiencing Overfishing
South Atlantic Board Sets Harvest Specifications & Initiates Addendum

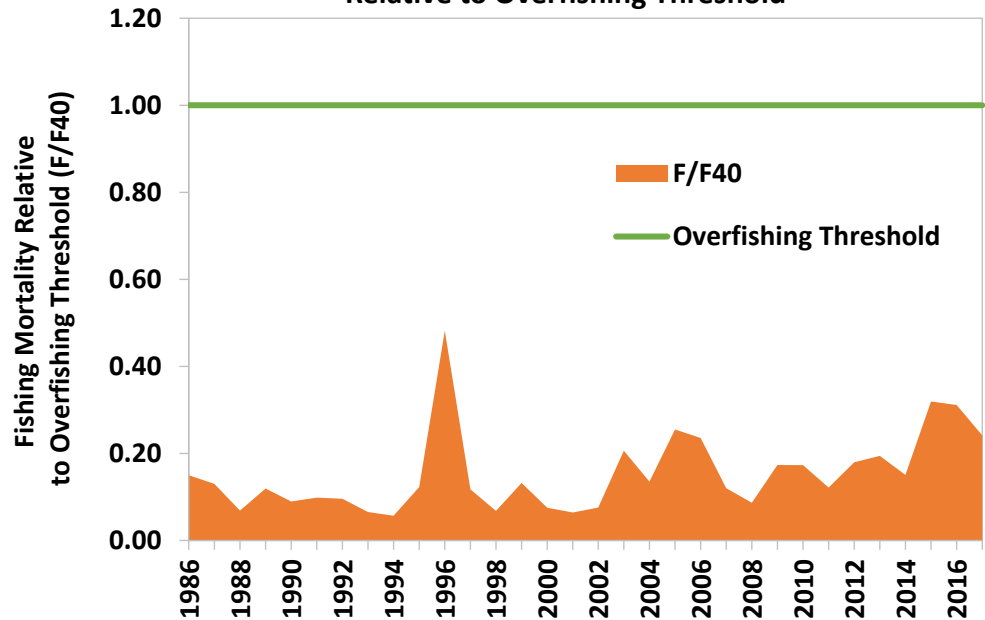
Arlington, VA – The Commission’s South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board accepted the Atlantic Cobia Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report, including new reference points, for management use. The assessment, which was conducted through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process, evaluated the Atlantic stock of cobia, which extends from the Georgia/Florida border north. Assessment results indicate the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

Spawning stock biomass (SSB) has been above the overfished threshold throughout the timeframe (1986-2017), indicating the coastwide stock is not overfished. SSB has shown several large increases following years of high recruitment, the most recent following the 2011 recruitment peak, with the largest SSB in the time series occurring in 2013. These peaks in SSB have been followed by declines when recruitment moves back towards its average. While SSB has undergone a steep decline since the 2013 peak, SSB remains above the overfished threshold.

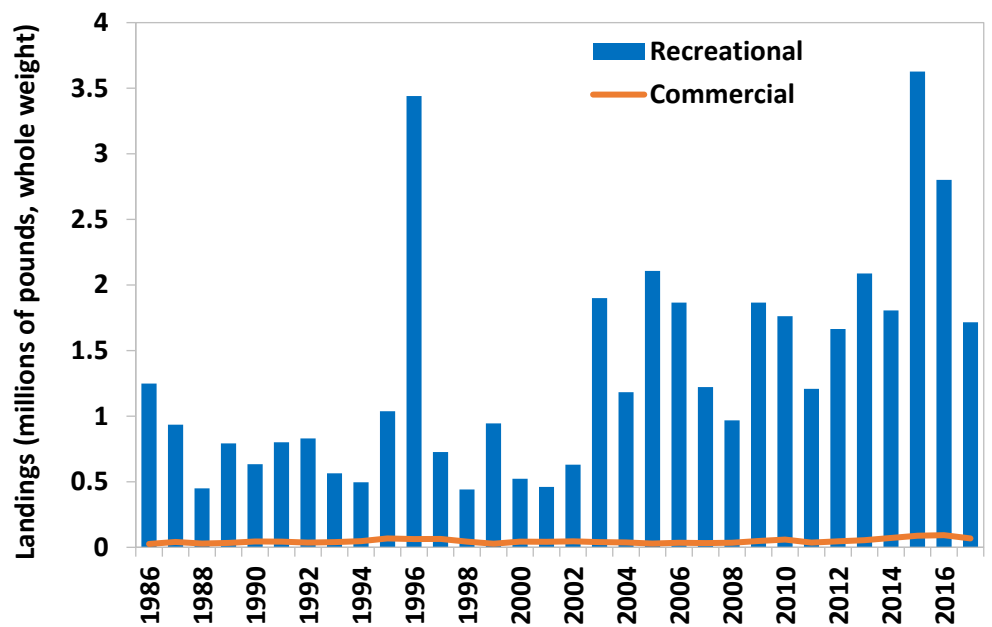


total landings. Fishing mortality showed some increase in the most recent years, but did not approach the overfishing threshold, indicating the coastwide stock has not undergone overfishing during the assessment timeframe. Several projections of the population under different harvest scenarios were conducted, describing predicted trends in biomass and the probability of the stock becoming overfished through 2024. The TC recommended harvest quota levels to the Board based on projections that maintained a low probability of the stock becoming overfished and did not result in consistent declines in SSB. Based on the assessment results and harvest projections, the Board approved an annual total harvest quota of 80,112 fish for the 2020-2022 fishing seasons. The Board maintained current recreational measures for 2020 while the states consider potential regulatory changes for future years.

Atlantic Cobia Fishing Mortality Relative to Overfishing Threshold



Atlantic Cobia Recreational and Commercial Landings



The Board also discussed recreational/commercial allocation as established by Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia, which currently allocates 92% of the total quota to the recreational fishery and 8% to the commercial fishery. These percentages were originally based on historical harvest from

each sector within a period of reference years, prior to the re-calibration of MRIP estimates. With the re-calibration of the recreational data, the percentages of harvest in the reference period changed, resulting in the current commercial allocation percentage being higher than its percentage of total harvest during the reference period. In response to this, the Board initiated an addendum to reevaluate allocation. The Board also noted potential regulatory inconsistencies among *de minimis* states and determined the *de minimis* measures should be reconsidered through the addendum.

The SEDAR 58 Report is available at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5e3d99a3SEDAR58_AtlCobiaAssessment_PeerReviewReport.pdf. An overview will be available on the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org, on the Cobia page under Stock Assessment Reports. For more information, please contact Dr. Mike Schmidtke, FMP Coordinator, at mschmidtke@asmfc.org.

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PR20-06

ASMFC South Atlantic Board Approves Atlantic Croaker and Spot Addenda

Arlington, VA – The Commission's South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board approved Addendum III to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Croaker and Addendum III to the Omnibus Amendment to the Interstate FMPs for Spanish Mackerel, Spot, and Spotted Seatrout. These Addenda adjust management of Atlantic croaker and spot through their respective Traffic Light Approaches (TLA).

Through the annual analysis of the TLA, which assigns a color (red, yellow, or green) to characterize relative levels of indicators that reflect the condition of the fish population (abundance characteristic) or fishery (harvest characteristic). If the amount of red, indicating low abundance or low harvest, in both characteristics exceeds threshold levels (30% and 60%) for too many years, management action is triggered. In 2018, the Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee and Spot Plan Review Team recommended updates to their respective TLAs that would incorporate additional fishery-independent indices, age information, use of regional characteristics, and changes to the management-triggering mechanism.

These Addenda change the management-triggering mechanisms to enact coastwide management if the amounts of red for both the harvest and abundance characteristics within a region (Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic) exceed threshold levels for 3 of the 4 most recent years for Atlantic croaker and 2 of the 3 most recent years for spot. The Addenda also define commercial and recreational management responses to triggers at each threshold level (see table below). Finally, the Addenda define the processes for evaluating the fisheries while triggered measures are in place and determining when triggered measures may be removed.

Management Triggers & Responses for Atlantic Croaker & Spot

Species	Recreational		Commercial	
	30% Threshold	60% Threshold	30% Threshold	60% Threshold
Atlantic Croaker	Bag Limit: up to 50 fish for non- <i>de minimis</i> states	Bag Limit: up to 40 fish for all states	Measures to achieve 1% harvest reduction from previous 10-year average for non- <i>de minimis</i> states with no regulations	Measures to achieve 5% harvest reduction from previous 10-year average for all states
Spot	Bag Limit: up to 50 fish for non- <i>de minimis</i> states	Bag Limit: up to 40 fish for all states	Measures to achieve 1% harvest reduction from previous 10-year average for non- <i>de minimis</i> states with no regulations	Measures to achieve 10% harvest reduction from previous 10-year average for all states

Note: Regulations will not go into effect unless management is triggered by the TLA Analysis. Both Addenda were approved for immediate implementation by the states of New Jersey through Florida. The next TLA analyses will be presented to the Board at the Commission’s 2020 Summer Meeting.

The Addenda will be available on the Commission’s website, www.asmfc.org (on the Atlantic Croaker and Spot webpages) by mid-February. For more information, please contact Dr. Mike Schmidtke, FMP Coordinator, at mschmidtke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR20-05

Meeting Summary

The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board met to review and consider acceptance of the Atlantic Cobia Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review (see above press release), take final action on Draft Addenda for Atlantic Croaker and Spot (see above press release), consider initiating changes to the Spanish Mackerel Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and discuss a roadmap for the next red drum stock assessment.

The Board discussed initiating management action to align state and federal management of Spanish mackerel. A federal commercial closure in 2019 prompted state, Commission, and South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) staff to compare Spanish mackerel management through the Commission’s Omnibus Amendment to the Interstate Fishery Management Plans (FMP) for Spanish Mackerel, Spot, and Spotted Seatrout (Omnibus Amendment) with that of the SAFMC’s FMP for Coastal Migratory Pelagics of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Region (CMP FMP). Differences between these plans exist in terms of recreational season definition, allowable gears, commercial management zones, recreational accountability measures, and commercial trip limits. The Board was presented with a summary of the differences between the FMPs. The Board noted the next stock assessment is scheduled for completion in 2022. This assessment will incorporate re-calibrated recreational catch estimates

from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), which will likely impact harvest quotas and other management measures. The Board decided action on the current differences between the FMPs can be postponed until after the stock assessment.

The Board also reviewed a proposal from the Red Drum Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) concerning the next red drum stock assessment. Previous assessments have had difficulty modeling red drum due to limited data on fish larger than the current slot limit, which can disproportionately contribute reproductively to the stock. It was recommended population simulation models be developed that would simulate the full red drum population, then test a variety of assessment modeling techniques to determine which would be most useful with a peer review in 2022. The SAS noted this project will require a substantial work and modeling expertise and would change the timeline for delivery of the next red drum assessment. The Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review of red drum, currently scheduled for 2022, would be postponed until 2024. The Board agreed with the SAS's proposal, tasked the SAS with conducting the simulation project, and recommended that the Interstate Fishery Management Program Policy Board adjust the stock assessment schedule accordingly.

For more information, please contact Dr. Michael Schmidtke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mschmidtke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Atlantic Cobia

Move to accept the SEDAR 58 Atlantic Cobia Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Reports and the recommended F40-based biological reference points for management use.

Motion made by Dr. Rhodes and seconded by Ms. Fegley. Motion carries unanimously.

Main Motion

Move to recommend a 2.4 million pound annual quota for cobia for 2020-2022 with status quo recreational measures in 2020.

Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Mr. Bell. Motion tabled.

Motion to Table

Move to table motion until after red drum items.

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Dr. Rhodes.

Main Motion as Modified

Move to recommend an 80,112 fish annual quota for cobia for 2020-2022 with status quo recreational measures in 2020.

Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Mr. Bell. Motion carries unanimously. (Roll call: In favor – NJ, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, NMFS, USFWS)

Move to initiate an addendum to reevaluate the recreational and commercial allocations for cobia and reconsider *de minimis* measures.

Motion made by Mr. Woodward and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion passes unanimously.

Atlantic Croaker Addendum III

Move to approve Option B, under Issue 1, for Atlantic Croaker Addendum III.

Motion made by Ms. Fegley and seconded by Mr. Gary. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to approve Option B, under Issue 2, for Atlantic Croaker Addendum III.

Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Mr. Estes. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to approve Option B, sub-option B1, under Issue 3, for Atlantic Croaker Addendum III.

Motion made by Ms. Fegley and seconded Mr. Estes. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to approve Option B, under Issue 4, for Atlantic Croaker Addendum III.

Motion made by Mr. Miller and seconded by Dr. Rhodes. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Spot Addendum III

Move to approve Option B, under Issue 1, for Spot Addendum III.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Batsavage. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to approve Option B, under Issue 2, for Spot Addendum III.

Motion made by Ms. Fegley and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to approve Option B, sub-option B2, under Issue 3, for Spot Addendum III.

Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Mr. Bell. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to approve Option B, under Issue 4, for Spot Addendum III.

Motion made by Mr. Miller and seconded by Dr. Rhodes. Motion passes approved unanimously.

Move to approve Addendum III to the Omnibus Amendment to the Interstate Fishery Management Plans for Spanish Mackerel, Spot, and Spotted Seatrout, and Addendum III to Amendment 1 to the croaker Fishery Management Plan as modified today with an immediate implementation date.

Motion made by Mr. Bell and seconded by Ms. Bolen. Motion passes unanimously. Roll call: In favor – NJ, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, NMFS, USFWS)

Move to elect Lynn Fegley as Vice Chair of the South Atlantic Board.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Haymans. Motion passes by unanimous consent.