



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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Coastal Pelagics Board Approves Atlantic Cobia Addendum II *Regional Recreational Allocation Framework Addresses Uncertainty and Incorporates Recent Harvest Data*

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s Coastal Pelagics Management Board approved Addendum II to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Cobia. The Addendum modifies the recreational allocation framework, allows the Board to update allocations quickly if the underlying data are revised, expands the range of data used in harvest evaluations, and allows the Board to set management measures for a longer period of time. Addendum II responds to increased cobia harvest in some Mid-Atlantic states in recent years, as well as concerns about high uncertainty associated with cobia recreational harvest estimates. All Addendum II measures are effective immediately, and will be used to set recreational measures for 2025 and beyond.

Addendum II changes both the geographic scope of the recreational allocation framework and the timeframe of data used as the basis for allocations. The Addendum changes the allocation framework from a state-by-state to a regional framework, with a northern region of Rhode Island through Virginia and a southern region of North Carolina through Georgia. The new regional allocation framework is intended to reduce uncertainty by using harvest estimates based on a larger sample size combining multiple states in a region, instead of individual state-level harvest estimates.

Each region is allocated part of the recreational quota based on each region’s percentage of the coastwide harvest in number of fish over the last ten years, combining 50% of 2014-2023 data and 50% of 2018-2023 data. Data from 2016 and 2017 are excluded due to fishery closures during those years, and data from 2020 are excluded due to COVID-19 impacts on recreational data collection. Using more recent data, as compared to previously using 2006-2015 data, accounts for changes in harvest and potential range expansion of the species in recent years.

There is a possibility that the recreational harvest estimates could be revised in the future by NOAA Fisheries, which would affect the percent allocations for each region. If the harvest estimates are revised,

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.

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Addendum II allows the Board to quickly update the percent allocations via Board vote to reflect the any revisions to the data used to establish the allocations.

Each region's percent allocation is applied to the coastwide recreational quota (currently 76,908 fish) to determine the regional harvest targets in number of fish. When a region's harvest is compared to its target, Addendum II specifies that a rolling average of up to five years of harvest data under the same management measures will be compared to the target, instead of limiting it to a three-year average. This allows for inclusion of two additional data years to account for the variability and uncertainty of cobia harvest estimates from year to year.

Finally, Addendum II allows the Board to set specifications (e.g., coastwide total harvest quota) via Board action for up to five years, which is a longer time period than the current three years. Setting management measures for a longer period of time is intended to align management action with the availability of new stock assessment information.

Addendum II will be available in late August on the Commission website at <http://www.asmfc.org/species/cobia> under Management Plans and FMP Reviews.

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