



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

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March 9, 2016
FB16-018

NOAA Fisheries Announces the Atlantic Migratory Group (Georgia to New York) Cobia Recreational Fishing Season will close on June 20, 2016

The recreational harvest of Atlantic migratory group cobia (from Georgia to New York) will close at **12:01 a.m. on June 20, 2016**. Recreational harvest of cobia will reopen on January 1, 2017.

The Atlantic migratory group includes cobia from Georgia through New York. Cobia off the east coast of Florida are part of the Gulf of Mexico migratory group. There are separate annual catch limits for the recreational and commercial sectors of Atlantic migratory group cobia. If the annual catch limits are exceeded, accountability measures are in place to ensure overfishing does not occur. If the Atlantic migratory group cobia recreational and total (recreational and commercial combined) annual catch limits are exceeded, NOAA Fisheries is required to reduce the length of the recreational fishing season in the following fishing year.

In 2015, both the recreational and the total annual catch limits of Atlantic migratory group cobia were exceeded. Thus, the accountability measure is triggered for 2016. Because the commercial annual catch limit was not exceeded, this closure is only for the recreational sector. During the closure, recreational harvest or possession of cobia is prohibited.

This closure is required by regulations implemented under the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Region and is necessary to protect the cobia resource.

This bulletin provides only a summary of the existing regulations. Full regulations can be found in the *Federal Register*. For more information, please see [frequently asked questions](#).

**Announcement of recreational fishing closure for
Atlantic (Georgia to New York) group cobia
Frequently Asked Questions**

When will recreational Atlantic migratory group cobia (Georgia to New York) be closed?

- The recreational harvest of Atlantic migratory group cobia will be closed in federal waters from Georgia to New York at **12:01 a.m. on June 20, 2016.**
- Recreational harvest of cobia will reopen on January 1, 2017.
- During the closure, recreational harvest or possession of cobia is prohibited.

Who will be affected?

- This closure applies to those fishing for cobia recreationally in federal waters from Georgia to New York, from a private vessel, charter vessel, or headboat.

Why will there be a recreational closure of Atlantic migratory group cobia (Georgia to New York)?

- Accountability measures are required by federal regulations to protect the cobia resource and prevent overfishing.
- Accountability measures help keep landings within the annual catch limits, or make adjustments if the annual catch limits are exceeded.
- The recreational accountability measure for cobia states if the recreational and total (recreational and commercial combined) annual catch limits are exceeded, NOAA Fisheries is required to reduce the length of the recreational fishing season in the following fishing year based on projections of when landings will reach the annual catch target.
- In 2015, the recreational annual catch limit of 630,000 pounds was exceeded by 910,776 pounds.
- Although the commercial sector did not exceed the annual catch limit of 60,000 pounds, combining the landings from both sectors exceeded the total annual catch limit of 690,000 pounds (Table 1).
- Because both the recreational and the total annual catch limits of Atlantic migratory group cobia were exceeded in 2015, the accountability measure to reduce the length of the recreational fishing season is triggered for 2016.
- Catch rates of cobia from 2013-2015 were examined to estimate when the annual catch target in 2016 would be expected to be met.
- Therefore, the recreational harvest of cobia will be closed on June 20, 2016, because the recreational annual catch target of 500,000 pounds is projected to be met by then.

Table 1. Recreational landings, annual catch limits, and annual catch targets in pounds whole weight for Atlantic migratory group cobia.

Year	Recreational Landings	Annual Catch Limit		Total Annual Catch Limit	Annual Catch Target
		Commercial	Recreational		Recreational
2015	1,540,776	60,000	630,000	690,000	520,000
2016+	-	50,000	620,000	670,000	500,000

What were the 2015 cobia recreational landings?

- Recreational cobia landings for the Atlantic migratory group cobia in 2015 were substantially higher than previous years (Table 2).
- Most of the landings were from state waters of North Carolina and Virginia.

Table 2. Recreational landings (pounds whole weight) of cobia from Georgia through New York during 2013-2015.

Year	GA	SC	NC	VA	Total
2013	29,224	19,130	492,969	354,463	895,786
2014	20,642	31,927	277,489	214,427	544,485
2015	67,804	123,952	630,373	718,647	1,540,776

Source: Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Do we know why the landings are higher in 2015 than in previous years?

- An increase in landings in 2015 could be attributed to greater fishing effort and larger fish being caught in 2015.
- The number of recreational trips that targeted cobia from New York to Georgia increased by 25% from 2014 to 2015.
- The average weights of cobia in the Atlantic migratory group area were higher in 2015 than in previous years.

How was the closure date determined?

- The 2016 predicted landings were generated from average 2013-2015 recreational landings. These landings are predicted to meet the ACT of 500,000 pounds on June 20th, 2016. The predicted landings are attributed to each state and shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Contribution of predicted recreational landings (pounds and percent of total landings) by state for the June 20th closure date. This was generated from average 2013-2015 recreational landings from January 1st to June 20th, and is based on the landings meeting the ACT of 500,000 pounds.

State	Pounds	Percent
Virginia	105,756	21%
North Carolina	284,649	57%
South Carolina	6,792	1%
Georgia	0	0%
Federal Waters	102,803	21%
Total	500,000	100%

Why is a closure occurring if most landings are from state waters?

- Cobia caught in state and federal waters counts against the federal annual catch limit.

Why does this closure not apply to fishermen off the east coast of Florida?

- Cobia from the east coast of Florida are part of the Gulf of Mexico migratory group.
- The boundary between the Gulf of Mexico migratory group and the Atlantic migratory group is the Georgia/Florida border.
- Genetic information from the most recent stock assessment for cobia indicates that the Gulf of Mexico cobia stock extends through the Florida east coast.

Will the closure for cobia apply to commercial fishermen?

- No. There are separate annual catch limits for the recreational and commercial sectors of Atlantic group cobia.
- Because the commercial annual catch limit was not exceeded, the closure in 2016 will only be for the recreational sector.
- However, the commercial sector could be closed if they meet or exceed their annual catch limit as well.

What is the status of the stock?

- Based on the Southeast Data, Assessment and Review stock assessment completed in January 2013, the Atlantic migratory group of cobia is not overfished (population size too low) or undergoing overfishing (rate of catching fish too high).

Can I fish for cobia in state waters?

- The recreational closure only prohibits harvest from Federal waters of Georgia to New York. Federal waters begin three nautical miles offshore of Georgia to New York and extend out to 200 nautical miles.
- However, some states have adopted compatible regulations.
- For information on closure of cobia in state waters contact your local state office on marine fishery issues.

Are new regulations being considered to extend the federal fishing season in 2017?

- The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council meets in Jekyll Island, Georgia from March 7-11, 2016, and will be discussing management measures for cobia that could potentially extend the fishing season in future years.

How can I get more information about the in-season closure?

- If you have further questions, feel free to contact NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office by phone at (727) 824-5305.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office

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F/SER2:JCM

APR 13 2016

Colonel James M. Kelley, Acting Director
North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell Street
P.O. Box 769
Morehead City, NC 28557

Dear Colonel Kelley:

On March 9, 2016, NOAA Fisheries announced the recreational harvest of Atlantic migratory group cobia will close in federal waters at 12:01 a.m. on June 20, 2016. The Atlantic migratory group includes cobia from Georgia through New York. Cobia off the east coast of Florida are part of the Gulf of Mexico migratory group.

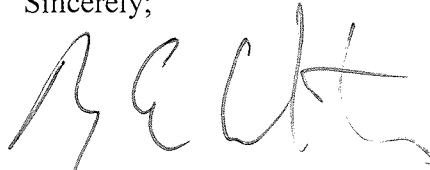
There are separate annual catch limits for the recreational and commercial sectors of Atlantic migratory group cobia. The recreational accountability measure for cobia specifies that if the sum of the recreational and commercial landings exceeds the combined catch limit for those two sectors, then NOAA Fisheries must reduce the length of the recreational season in the following fishing year by the amount necessary to constrain recreational landings to the annual catch target. In 2015, both the recreational and the total annual catch limits of Atlantic migratory group cobia were exceeded. Thus, the accountability measure is triggered for 2016. Because the commercial annual catch limit was not exceeded, this closure is only for the recreational sector. During the closure, recreational harvest or possession of cobia is prohibited.

We request you close state waters consistent with the June 20, 2016, federal closure. Allowing harvest after this date could lead to overruns of the catch limit and result in overfishing of the stock. If your state does not implement compatible regulations, future seasons may also need to close earlier, which would negatively affect other states. I encourage you to work with the state of Virginia to determine if more restrictive state regulations can be put into place this year to extend the 2016 recreational fishing season. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has begun to develop a framework amendment for the Atlantic cobia stock, which will consider management measures to extend the recreational fishing season in the future. In addition, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has sent a letter to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission requesting the Commission consider complementary management approaches for this species at its upcoming meeting.



The cooperative efforts of state-federal partnerships help achieve region-wide fishery management goals and objectives, and lead to better enforcement, minimize the regulatory burden on fishermen, and increase the potential for long-term benefits. I appreciate your assistance in the ongoing efforts to protect Atlantic cobia.

Sincerely;

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Crabtree', written in a cursive style.

Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.
Regional Administrator

Cc: Mr. Rob O'Reilly, Chief, Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Mr. John M.R. Bull, Commissioner, Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Dr. Michelle Duval, Chair, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Gregg T. Waugh, Executive Director, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
John Bullard, NOAA Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Regional Administrator
Robert E. Beal, Executive Director, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Cobia Closure Analysis for Virginia and North Carolina State Waters

Virginia and North Carolina are considering implementing changes to the cobia size limit and implementing a cobia vessel limit for the recreational sector fishing in state waters. These potential regulations, as well as regulations for other states, were analyzed to determine 2016 closure dates based on when the Atlantic cobia landings are projected to reach the 2016 annual catch target (ACT) of 500,000 pounds whole weight (lbs ww). Preliminary trip intercept data for the data-rich year of 2015 were provided by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and used to project percent reductions in cobia landings in Virginia and North Carolina state waters. Variables used for the analysis were increases in the size limit and imposing a vessel limit. The current Atlantic cobia closure is June 20, 2016. This closure was projected by using 2013-2015 average recreational landings and applying the current fishing regulations.

Analysis for Virginia State Waters

The average 2013-2015 landings in the state waters of Virginia were modified assuming that in May 1, 2016 Virginia will make a change to the size limit and/or implement a vessel limit. The May 1st date was used because the Virginia Marine Resources Commission will meet in late April. Table 1 provides the percent reductions and predicted closure dates for different size limits and vessel limits if Virginia chooses to only implement one regulatory change (i.e., only a size limit change or only a vessel limit change). Table 2 provides the percent reductions and predicted closure dates assuming both size limits and vessel limits are implemented. The closure dates provided in both tables assume the regulatory changes only impact landings in Virginia state waters.

Table 1. Estimated percent decreases in cobia landings for various size limits and vessel limits for Virginia state waters, and the corresponding closure date.

Size Limit			Closure Date
Fork Length	Total Length	% Reduction	
33	37	0.0	20-Jun
34	38.1	0.0	20-Jun
35	39.3	0.0	20-Jun
36	40.4	6.0	20-Jun
37	41.5	7.2	20-Jun
40	45.0	17.9	22-Jun
45	50.7	39.1	23-Jun
Vessel Limit		% Reduction	Closure Date
1		48.3	25-Jun
2		22.5	22-Jun
3		17.9	22-Jun

4	7.9	20-Jun
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Table 2. Estimated percent decreases in cobia landings for a combination of size limits and vessel limits for Virginia state waters, and the corresponding closure date.

Both Size Limit and Vessel Limit Combined Fork Length	Vessel Limit	% Reduction	Closure Date
33	1	48.3	25-Jun
34	1	48.3	25-Jun
35	1	48.3	25-Jun
36	1	54.3	26-Jun
37	1	55.5	26-Jun
40	1	66.2	27-Jun
45	1	87.4	28-Jun
33	2	22.5	22-Jun
34	2	22.5	22-Jun
35	2	22.5	22-Jun
36	2	28.5	23-Jun
37	2	29.7	23-Jun
33	3	17.9	22-Jun
34	3	17.9	22-Jun
35	3	17.9	22-Jun
36	3	23.9	22-Jun
37	3	25.1	22-Jun
33	4	7.9	20-Jun
34	4	7.9	20-Jun
35	4	7.9	20-Jun
36	4	13.9	21-Jun
37	4	15.1	21-Jun

All of the length data analyzed for this report are fork lengths. In 2015 the recreational landings data for Virginia state waters did not have any fish harvested for the lengths of 33 through 35 inches fork length. Only cobia lengths of 36 inches fork length and longer were reported. The current minimum size limit for cobia in Virginia is 37 inches total length, which converts to 33-inches fork length.

The Atlantic cobia recreational landings peak in the May/June wave, and the majority of these landings come from North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Virginia landings don't start until the May/June wave, and the majority of the Virginia landings occur in the July/August wave. Figure 1 shows the total average Atlantic and Virginia state water landings for 2013-2015. The high Atlantic landings (primarily from North Carolina through Georgia) in the May/June wave cause the fishery to close because the ACT of 500,000 lbs ww is projected to be

met. Even if it was assumed there was zero harvest of cobia in Virginia state waters, the cobia season would not be extended for the rest of year and is predicted to be closed on July 18, 2016.

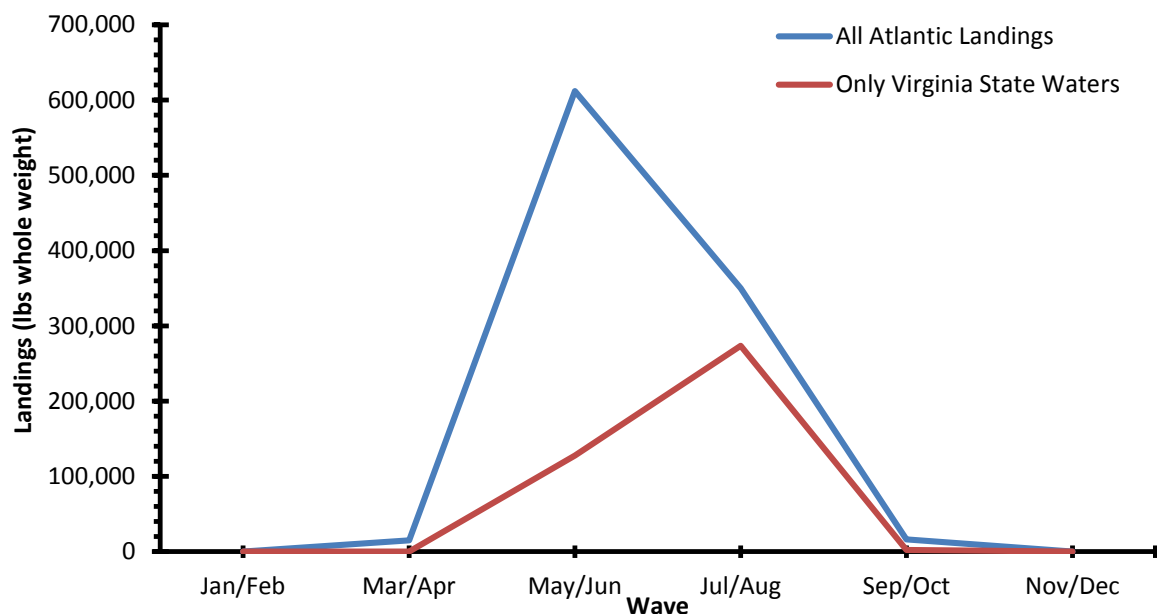


Figure 1. Average Atlantic cobia recreational landings from 2013-2015. The “All Atlantic Landings” are from New York through Georgia. The “Only Virginia State Waters” are only landings from the state waters of Virginia.

Source: SEFSC Recreational ACL Dataset

Analysis for North Carolina State Waters

The average 2013-2015 landings in the state waters of North Carolina were modified assuming that in May 23, 2016 North Carolina will make a change to the size limit and/or implement a vessel limit. The date of May 23, 2016 was chosen because the North Carolina Marine Fisheries commission is meeting on Friday May 20th to discuss potential of new regulations, and any new regulations will be implemented on Monday May 23, 2016. Table 3 provides the percent reductions and predicted closure dates for different size limits and vessel limits if North Carolina chooses to only implement one regulatory change (i.e., only a size limit change or only a vessel limit change). Table 4 provides the percent reductions and predicted closure dates assuming both size limits and vessel limits are implemented. The closure dates provided in both tables assume the regulatory changes only impact landings in North Carolina state waters.

Table 3. Estimated percent decreases in cobia landings for various size limits and vessel limits for North Carolina state waters, and the corresponding closure date.

Size Limit		Closure Date
Fork Length	% Reduction	
33	0.0	20-Jun
34	2.8	20-Jun
35	5.2	21-Jun
36	7.2	21-Jun
37	8.5	21-Jun
38	11.3	21-Jun
39	13.9	22-Jun
40	15.7	22-Jun
41	18.8	22-Jun
42	25.1	23-Jun
43	30.4	24-Jun
44	34.9	25-Jun
45	39.1	26-Jun
Vessel Limit	% Reduction	Closure Date
1	28.3	24-Jun
2	27.3	24-Jun
3	12.1	21-Jun
4	5.1	21-Jun

Table 4. Estimated percent decreases in cobia landings for a combination of size limits and vessel limits for North Carolina state waters, and the corresponding closure date.

Both Size Limit and Vessel Limit Combined			Closure Date
Fork Length	Vessel Limit	Reduction	
33	1	28.3	24-Jun
34	1	31.1	24-Jun
35	1	33.5	25-Jun
36	1	35.5	25-Jun
37	1	36.8	26-Jun
40	1	44.0	28-Jun
45	1	67.4	6-Jul
33	2	27.3	24-Jun
34	2	30.1	24-Jun
35	2	32.5	25-Jun
36	2	34.5	25-Jun
37	2	35.8	25-Jun
40	2	43.0	27-Jun
45	2	66.4	6-Jul
33	3	12.1	21-Jun
34	3	14.9	22-Jun
35	3	17.3	22-Jun
36	3	19.3	22-Jun
37	3	20.6	22-Jun
40	3	27.8	24-Jun
45	3	51.2	30-Jun

Analysis for Virginia and North Carolina State Waters

An analysis was conducted that combined changes to size limits and vessel limits in both Virginia and North Carolina state waters at the same time (Table 5). The analysis assumed both Virginia and North Carolina implemented the same regulation. For example, if both Virginia and North Carolina implement a 35 inch fork length size limit and a vessel limit of 2 fish. This analysis provided a range of closure dates, and one option did not have any predicted closure date.

Table 5. Estimated closure dates for a combination of size limits and vessel limits for both Virginia and North Carolina state waters.

Both Size Limit and Vessel Limit Combined		Closure Date
Fork Length	Vessel Limit	
35	2	27-Jun
35	1	30-Jun
37	2	28-Jun
37	1	3-Jul
40	2	3-Jul
40	1	15-Jul
45	2	3-Aug
45	1	No Closure

The analysis assumes Virginia regulation changes will not be implemented until May 1st and North Carolina regulation changes will not be implemented until May 23, 2016. Therefore, any new size limits or vessel limits in North Carolina state waters are only applied to the landings on May 23rd to December 31st. The predicted daily landings in North Carolina are high for the month of May. Any new North Carolina regulations before May 23rd would further reduce the catch rates and likely extend the season even more.

This analysis only impacts predicted landings in the state water of Virginia and North Carolina. Any new regulations in federal waters or in the state waters of South Carolina and Georgia could potentially extend the season.

Cobia Management (Revised April 2016)

History of Management

- Cobia has been under federal management since 1983, through the Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plan. This is a joint plan between the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils.
 - 1983: established a minimum size limit of 33-inches fork length or 37-inches total (both sectors)
 - 1990: established a two-fish recreational bag limit and commercial possession limit (per person)
 - 1997: expanded the management unit through the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's jurisdiction (New York)
- Prior to 2012, cobia was jointly managed by the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils as a single stock throughout both jurisdictions. There were no annual catch limits ("ACL" or quota) or commercial/recreational sector allocations. Amendment 18 to the fishery management plan modified this (approved in September 2011, regulations effective January 2012).
 - Cobia was separated into two stocks at the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils' jurisdictional boundary (west of the Florida Keys). The Atlantic stock range was the east coast of Florida through New York.
 - Annual catch limits (quotas) were established for both Gulf and Atlantic stocks as required by the 2006 reauthorization of the federal Magnuson Stevens Act. The total annual catch limit (commercial + recreational combined) was set at 1,571,399 pounds whole weight.
 - Because there was no stock assessment for Atlantic cobia at that time, the annual catch limit was based on average commercial and recreational landings (average landings from 2000-2008, plus 1.5 times the standard deviation).
 - Commercial and recreational sector allocations were established for the Atlantic stock (92 percent recreational = 1,445,687 pounds whole weight; 8 percent commercial = 125,712 pounds whole weight).
- The 2013 stock assessment modified the Atlantic/Gulf stock boundary from the jurisdictional boundary between the councils to the Georgia/Florida state line based on genetic analysis (the transition zone was between Cape Canaveral and Georgia based on tagging information; for ease of management the Georgia/Florida boundary was selected).
- Modifications to the stock boundary and new annual catch limits from the 2013 stock assessment became effective in March 2015 through Amendment 20B to the fishery management plan. The assessment concluded that cobia was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring.
- The Gulf stock total annual catch limit for 2015 was 2.52 million pounds; the portion of the Gulf stock total annual catch limit allocated to east Florida for 2015 was 900,000 pounds (recreational = 830,000 pounds; commercial = 70,000 pounds). The sub-allocation of the Gulf stock total annual catch limit to east Florida is based on the average proportion of harvest from this area during the years 1998-2012 and is 36 percent of the Gulf stock total annual catch limit.
- The Atlantic stock (Georgia-New York) total annual catch limit for 2015 was set at 690,000 pounds whole weight (recreational = 630,000 pounds; commercial = 60,000 pounds).
- The Atlantic stock (Georgia-New York) recreational annual catch limit for 2015 was 630,000 pounds; estimates of harvest through the end of 2015 are 1.54 million pounds.
 - The majority of that harvest was landed in Virginia (~718,000 pounds) followed by North Carolina (~631,000 pounds)
 - This is primarily a Wave 3 (May/June) fishery for Georgia through North Carolina; Virginia does have significant harvest in Wave 4 (July/August) and caught the majority of fish in Wave 4 in 2015.

Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures

- Annual catch limits (quotas) are required by the 2006 reauthorization of the federal Magnuson Stevens Act.
 - Annual catch limits are required for all managed species, regardless of stock status (i.e., overfished or overfishing) and regardless of whether there is a stock assessment.
 - Each fishery management council has a Scientific and Statistical Committee that determines the maximum allowable biological catch for each species or species group. For species without a stock

assessment, landings-based approaches are often used (i.e., average landings or median landings over a time period).

- The councils can set annual catch limits equal to the maximum allowable biological catch, but not above it. For cobia (as well as most species managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council), the annual catch limit is set equal to the maximum allowable biological catch.
- Accountability measures are regulations meant to ensure that annual catch limits are not exceeded, and if they are exceeded, that adjustments are made to protect the resource. These are also required for all species under the federal Magnuson Stevens Act.
 - For almost all species managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, once an annual catch limit is met, the fishery – commercial or recreational – is closed in season.
- The recreational accountability measures for cobia do not include an in-season closure if the annual catch limit is met or projected to be met, due to the pulse nature of the fishery.
- The recreational accountability measures currently specify use of a three-year running average to determine if the recreational annual catch limit for a particular year has been exceeded except that:
 - The initial year “re-sets” when the annual catch limit is updated. Because the annual catch limit for cobia was changed in 2015, only 2015 recreational landings are compared to the 2015 recreational annual catch limit.
 - For 2016, the average of 2015-2016 will be compared to 2016 recreational annual catch limit; for 2017, the average of 2015-2017 will be used and a moving three-year average after that until the next stock assessment updates the annual catch limits.
- If the total (commercial + recreational) annual catch limit has been exceeded, the accountability measures require NOAA Fisheries to reduce the length of the recreational season in the following year by an amount that will constrain harvest to the annual catch target for that year.
 - The annual catch target is a level of catch set to account for management uncertainty. The 2016 annual catch target for cobia is 500,000 pounds.
 - NOAA Fisheries can also readjust this season length if available harvest data during the year indicates the recreational annual catch target has not been met.
 - If the total annual catch limit is exceeded AND the stock is overfished, the annual catch limit for the appropriate sector will be reduced in the following year; the 2013 stock assessment indicated Atlantic cobia is not overfished and overfishing was not occurring, so there will be no reduction in the recreational annual catch limit for 2016 (620,000 pounds).
- The 2016 annual catch limit of 620,000 pounds will remain in effect for future years until a new stock assessment is conducted.
- All harvest in state waters is counted against the federal annual catch limit.

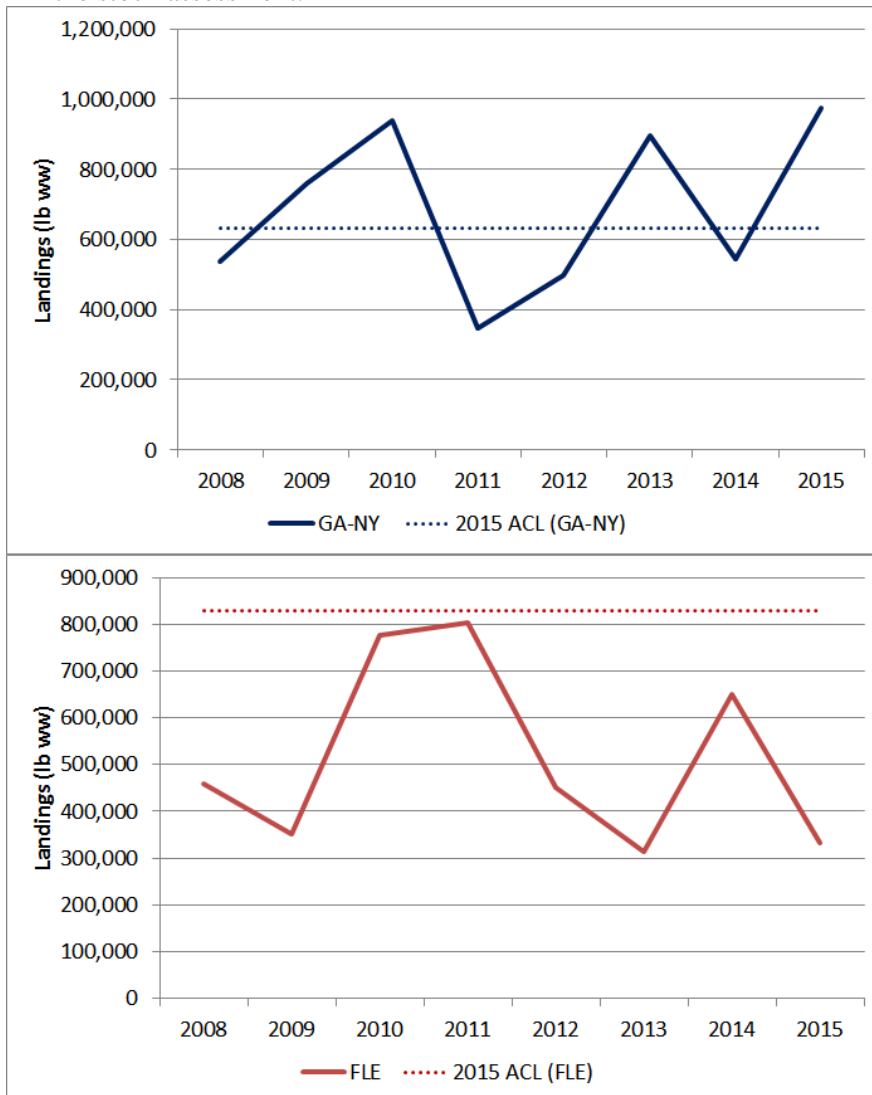
Management Measures

- The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council discussed the issue of 2015 recreational cobia harvest and impacts to the 2016 season at its December 2015 meeting in Atlantic Beach, and the certainty of a shortened season for cobia given the amount of the harvest overage in 2015.
- South Carolina has legislation moving forward to drop to a one-fish limit in state waters for a portion of their range (south of Edisto Island). The legislation is awaiting Governor Haley’s signature.
- Florida and Virginia have had one-fish/person recreational bag limits in state waters for years. There are no regulations in Maryland state waters. New York and New Jersey each have two-fish/person recreational limits and sporadic catch.
- The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reviewed an options paper for a cobia framework amendment at its March 2016 council meeting that would modify cobia management in 2017. The Council directed staff to develop a draft framework amendment to include the following actions:
 - Changes to accountability measures;
 - Changes to recreational vessel limits;
 - Combined recreational vessel limits with increased minimum size limits;
 - Combined recreational bag limits with increased minimum size limits;
 - Changing the start date of the fishing year;

- Changes to commercial measures to require a step-down to a one-fish possession limit when 75 percent of the commercial annual catch limit is met; and
- Requested the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission consider a complementary fishery management plan for state waters

Additional Information

- Had the stock boundary change occurred in previous years, the graphs below show that the Georgia-New York recreational harvest has fluctuated above and below the 2015 annual catch limit; east Florida recreational harvest has been consistently below the east Florida 2015 Annual Catch Limit.
- The results of the 2013 stock assessment shows a consistent decline in spawning biomass (the poundage of fish able to contribute to the next generation) beginning in the late 1990s/early 2000s through the last year of data in the stock assessment.



Top panel: Recreational landings (in pounds whole weight) from Georgia-New York for the years 2008- September 2015 (solid line) vs. 2015 recreational annual catch limit (dotted line).

Bottom panel: Recreational landings from east Florida (pounds whole weight) for the years 2008-September 2015 (solid line) vs. 2015 recreational annual catch limit.

Motions from the Marine Fisheries Commission advisory committees on cobia.

Southern Advisory Committee	Northern Advisory Committee	Finfish Advisory Committee
<p>Advise MFC to complement federal June 20 season closure in state waters.</p>	<p>Recommend MFC maintain the current minimum size limit (33 inches) and one fish per person possession limit through June 20, 2016. After June 20, 2016 implement a two-fish per vessel possession limit, becoming out of compliance with federal regulations.</p> <p>Recommend the MFC request NMFS to reconsider the biological boundary between the Gulf and Atlantic cobia stocks.</p>	<p>Recommend MFC maintain the current minimum size limit (33 inches) and one-fish per person possession limit through June 20, 2016. After June 20, 2016, implement a two-fish per vessel possession limit, becoming out of compliance with federal regulations.</p> <p>Recommend the MFC request NMFS to reconsider the biological boundary between the Gulf and Atlantic cobia stocks.</p> <p>Request MFC come up with ways to collect additional recreational catch data on cobia with a tag system being one option.</p> <p>Recommend MFC request commercial sector annual catch limit be reduced by same percentage as recreational sector annual catch limit.</p> <p>Request MFC work with Michelle Duval to develop coast wide state-by-state allocations for cobia.</p>