

**Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Coastal Migratory Pelagics Advisory Panel
Webinar Summary**

October 9, 2018

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Participants:

Judd Curtis	Jeff Mathews	Ed Walker
Chris Jenkins	Kelty Readenour	Robert Woithe
David Krebs	William Stein III	
Tom Marvel	Fred Tewell	

Council Members:

Susan Boggs	Tom Frazer
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Observers:

Susan Gerhart	Roy Crabtree	Costa Kouzounis
Wade Hardy	Rich Malinowski	Charlotte Marin

Staff:

Ryan Rindone	Karen Hoak	Beth Hager
Jessica Matos	Carrie Simmons	John Froeschke

Discussion of CMP Framework Amendment 7

Action 1

Staff reviewed Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP) Framework Amendment 7, which considers modifications to the size and possession limits for Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) migratory group cobia (Gulf cobia) in the Gulf Zone (see Figure 1.1.1 in the document). Action 1 addresses proposed modifications to the minimum size limit for Gulf cobia. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (Gulf Council) current preferred alternative for Action 1 is Alternative 2, which would increase the minimum size limit from 33 inches fork length (FL) to 36 inches FL. Doing so is estimated to result in a reduction in landings of 10.3% for the commercial sector and 26.1% for the recreational sector. Recreational landings typically account for more than 90% of Gulf cobia landings, and the Gulf cobia stock is managed under a stock ACL without sector allocations. Female cobia are estimated to reach a larger size at age than males.

Advisory Panel (AP) members thought of cobia as an incidentally caught species, with most fishermen opportunistically sight-casting to cobia when they happen upon them. Waiting to make a change in management until the next stock assessment was discussed; since it is likely that the next change in cobia management won't come into effect until 2021 (after the next scheduled stock assessment), the AP thought it prudent to recommend management changes

now. AP members recognized that larger fish are more reproductively important to the stock than smaller fish, and that cobia growth in length tapers off as the fish age. As such, AP members did not think a slot limit was necessary.

Motion: The CMP AP recommends Preferred Alternative 2 in Action 1:

Preferred Alternative 2: Increase the recreational and commercial minimum size limit for Gulf cobia to 36 inches FL in the Gulf Council’s jurisdictional area.

Motion carried unanimously.

Action 2

Staff reviewed Action 2 in CMP Framework Amendment 7, which considers modifying the possession limit for Gulf cobia. The current possession limit is two fish per person per day. The Gulf Council currently prefers Alternative 2, which would decrease the daily possession limit to one fish per person. The Gulf Council also prefers Alternative 3, Option 3a, which would establish a two fish daily vessel limit in the Gulf Zone. The combination of the Gulf Council’s preferred alternatives is estimated to reduce landings by 6% (Alternative 2) and 5% percent (Alternative 3, Option 3a) for the commercial sector, and by 4% (Alternative 2) and 9.1% (Alternative 3, Option 3a) for the recreational sector.

AP members thought the present lack of any kind of vessel limit for cobia was concerning, and agreed that creating a vessel limit would serve to protect the stock from opportunistic overharvest. Debate over whether the vessel limit should be “per day” or “per trip” highlighted the needs of charter vessels that run multiple trips per day. A daily limit could unfairly restrict which customers could retain cobia if the vessel’s limit had been caught on an earlier trip. As such, AP members concurred with decreasing the per person possession limit to one fish per day, and also favored instituting a vessel trip limit, rather than a daily vessel limit as is currently prescribed in Alternative 3 of Action 2.

Motion: The CMP AP recommends that the Council decrease the per person recreational and commercial possession limit for Gulf cobia to one fish per day, and create a recreational and commercial vessel limit for Gulf cobia of two fish per trip. Anglers must abide by the stricter of the regulations.

Motion carried unanimously.

No other business was brought before the AP, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.