

Public Hearing Summary
CMP Amendment 32: Modifications to the Gulf of Mexico Migratory Group Cobia
Catch Limits, Possession Limits, Size Limits, and Framework Procedure
FLEC Zone

Key West, Florida

October 18, 2021

Council/Staff:

Christina Wiegand
Cameron Rhodes
Jessica McCawley

0 members of the public attended

Jupiter, Florida

October 19, 2021

Council/Staff:

Christina Wiegand
Cameron Rhodes
Jessica McCawley
Chester Brewer

5 members of the public attended

4 members of the public commented

Ira Laks: For-Hire

Ira would like the Council to look at different alternatives for commercial fishermen and realize that recreational cobia can be caught and sold from the EEZ and state waters. He would like to see additional analysis on a 3-fish per trip limit for the commercial sector. A 3-fish per trip limit would help fisherman on the few days that they do encounter cobia.

Robert Pelosi: Commercial

Fishermen in the area don't catch or even really see very many big cobia. The average cobia is between 30 and 37-inches fork length. Raising the minimum size limit from 33-inches to 36-inches fork length is going to hurt fishermen. They don't catch cobia often, but when they do it's a prized catch. Robert likes the idea of bringing the bag limit down to one-fish per person in federal waters for the recreational sector. However, he would like to see the commercial fishermen at two-fish per person because most of the people are operating alone in the boat (especially kingfish fishermen) while recreational fishermen typically have multiple people on board. The overall reduction of the annual catch limit is pretty big hit to fishermen. Fishermen used to catch more cobia from Jupiter through south Florida, but really didn't get into cobia fishing until the oil spill. The years following the oil spill there were more cobia than he'd seen the previous seven

years. The number of cobia has tapered off some, but they still see a pretty good number, especially following stingrays.

Zack Wilson: Charter

Zack would like the Council to take a look at and consider how shark depredation affects the cobia population. Sharks have gotten worse in recent years, and fishermen target cobia around sharks. If you hook ten fish, you lose nine to sharks. This shouldn't be considered a natural cause of death because that fish is hooked. Those numbers need to be accounted for when looking at the cobia population.

Chip Garber

As soon as anything is wrong with the cobia, the sharks will be all over the area. Used to see cobia swimming with a single bull shark and were able to get one or two easily, now it is packs of sharks that pounce on cobia.

Cocoa Beach, Florida

October 20, 2021

Council/Staff:

Christina Wiegand

Cameron Rhodes

Jessica McCawley

Chester Brewer

2 members of the public attended

2 members of the public commented

Barrett Colby: Commercial

Barrett is not happy with the estimates of recreational catch through the MRIP program. He doesn't want to see fish taken away from commercial fishermen who are just seafood harvesters providing fish for the public. Because of MRIP showing changes in recreational landings, he's concerned the Council is going to take fish away from the commercial sector and thus from the non-fishing public. He doesn't commercially fish for cobia but is happy with what is proposed in the amendment and thinks the fish will have a better chance of recovering.

Brian Lind: Recreational

Brian agrees on how the information is being gathered for both sectors and understands it's the best information available. He doesn't catch a lot of cobias but every now and then they show up, based on the season. He agrees with the regulations.

Jacksonville, Florida
October 21, 2021

Council/Staff:

Christina Wiegand
Cameron Rhodes
Jessica McCawley

0 members of the public attended