

**Public Comment Summary**  
**Framework Amendment 7: Modifications to Gulf of Mexico Migratory Group**  
**Cobia Size and Possession Limits**

**41 Written Comments were received.**

**Action 1: Cobia Minimum Size Limit**

- Support for No Action – retain the current 33-inch fork length minimum size limit.
  - Increasing the minimum length will result in higher total mortality.
  - Anglers will still gaff fish to avoid injury or boat damage. If fish are too small they'll be discarded dead.
- Support for Preferred Alternative 2 – 36-inch fork length minimum size limit.
- Support for Alternative 3 – 39-inch fork length minimum size limit.
- Support for a 40-inch minimum size limit.
- Support for a 45-inch minimum size limit.
- Support for a size limit increase with no change in possession limits.
- Minimum size limits should only increase for charter/headboats.

**Action 2: Cobia Possession limits**

- Support for No Action – retain the current 2 fish per person per day possession limit.
  - Commercial fishermen depend on cobia in the winter.
  - Fishing is an expensive hobby, there is no reason to cut the cobia limit in half especially since all of our other species are being taken away.
- Support for Alternative 2 – 1 fish per person per day.
  - During the week charter and private vessels harvest multiple fish and there is nothing left to catch on the weekend.
- Support for Preferred Alternative 3, Preferred Option 3a - 2 fish vessel limit.
  - Take some pressure off the fish and allow the stock to recover
- Support for Preferred Alternative 3, Option 3b – 4 fish vessel limit
- Support for a 3 fish vessel limit.
  - Dropping it to 3 for now, in absence of science, would allow room to drop it further if the science corroborates the need for a reduction.
  - There is no need to keep 16 cobia on a single boat. Even party boats can have a successful trip with 2 or 3 large cobia onboard.
- Support for a possession limit change but no size change.

**General Cobia Comments**

- There has been a decline in the number of Cobia.
  - Removal of rig structure has contributed to the decline.
  - The shrimp opening was moved and is now later than the migratory run of cobia so they're harder to target.
  - Cobia have been non-existent off the Mississippi coast this year and last year.

- The annual spring migration along the north central coast has seen a dramatic decline.
- There are plenty of cobia.
  - While Florida fishermen may be seeing a decline, there is no such issue off the Louisiana coast.
  - Divers are seeing plenty of large schools of cobia.
  - There is no need to manage cobia with lower limits, the population hasn't declined.
- Cobia fishing is cyclical. There are good years and there are bad years.
- There are more small fish around than there have been in previous years.
- Close the fishery entirely in 2019 to allow the stock to recover.
- Management changes should not be made without science to prove the stock is in decline.
  - The decline in landings for 2017 may be due to reduced effort because of over regulation of other species.
  - The recreational sector needs accountability through mandatory call-in reporting prior to landing before regulations changes are made.
- Cobia is one of the few fish that isn't over regulated. Leave it alone.
- Changing regulations for the commercial sector will yield results.
  - Commercial harvest should be stopped.
- Require a large net for boating cobia to discourage gaffing and allow for less mortality of undersized fish.
- The Council should consider a season limit of 5 fish per person per year.
- There should not be tournament fishing for cobia.