



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

July 27, 2020

To: South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board

From: Michael Schmidtke, FMP Coordinator

RE: Upcoming Scheduling Considerations for Cobia, Atlantic Croaker, and Spot

Atlantic Cobia

In August 2019, the Board approved Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia (Atlantic cobia), with an implementation date of July 1, 2020. In February 2020, the Board specified harvest quotas for 2020-2022 and decided to maintain state recreational regulations in 2020 to allow time for states to develop management strategies (seasons and vessel limits) to implement the new recreational quota and state harvest targets in 2021. Additionally, the Board initiated Draft Addendum I to Amendment 1, in part, to consider reallocation of quotas for the commercial and recreational fisheries.

Due to COVID-19, Draft Addendum I was not considered for public comment at the Commission's 2020 Spring Meeting, but will be considered at the Summer Meeting. If the Board approves Draft Addendum I for public comment, hearings will be scheduled and held in August and September with Board consideration for final approval at the Annual Meeting in October.

Because Draft Addendum I considers a change to commercial and recreational quotas through reallocation, a potential timeline for implementation could be for states to submit plans for implementing new quotas and measures from both Amendment 1 and Draft Addendum I for review by the Cobia Technical Committee (TC) by mid-November. The TC could then conduct their review in early December, and the Board could consider approval of plans via email or webinar later in December, prior to the holidays. This would allow some states to be able to implement new regulations prior to 2021, and most, if not all, to implement prior to the beginning of the main fishing season in the spring. If the Board intends to review implementation plans via email or a separate webinar, that should be agreed upon at a Board meeting. Time is reserved at the upcoming Summer Meeting for considering this or alternative timelines.

Atlantic Croaker and Spot

Traffic Light Approach (TLA) analyses for Atlantic croaker and spot are typically conducted and presented to the Board at the Summer Meeting. After approval to Addendum III to each of the

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Atlantic Croaker and Spot FMPs, TLA analyses were planned to incorporate a regional approach that uses the Chesapeake Bay Multispecies Monitoring and Assessment Program (ChesMMAP) as an abundance index for the Mid-Atlantic components of the stocks. However, changes were made to the ChesMMAP survey in 2019, requiring calibration of previous data points. This calibration is in progress, but may not be available during 2020.

The Atlantic Croaker and Spot TCs will meet to discuss potential adjustments to the TLA analyses for 2020, and plan to present results at the 2020 Annual Meeting. Under Addenda III, the TCs are able to consider and use other surveys, as deemed appropriate, to provide the best available scientific advice through the TLA. If management action is triggered and initiated at the Annual Meeting, a timeline for implementation of triggered measures would also need to be established.