

Atlantic Cobia Recreational Management Changes

Cobia Addendum II established a new regional recreational allocation framework resulting in new regional harvest targets based on the current coastwide total recreational harvest quota in place through 2026. To determine 2025-2026 measures for each region, the average 2021-2023 recreational harvest for each region was compared against its regional harvest target. The Northern Region's (Rhode Island through Virginia) average harvest was above its target, requiring a 15.9% reduction in harvest. The Southern Region's (North Carolina through Georgia) average harvest was below its target, so states in the Southern Region will maintain status quo measures for 2025. The Cobia Technical Committee (TC) developed a suite of recreational management options for the Northern Region estimated to meet the required 15.9% reduction. Each option is comprised of three components: regionwide size limit, regionwide vessel limit, and a season for Maryland, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, and Virginia. Data are not available to calculate any reduction associated with implementing a season for Rhode Island through Delaware. The Board approved the TC's methodology for developing recreational options to meet the Northern Region reduction. States in the Northern Region will coordinate to select a regionwide size limit, regionwide vessel limit, and season for Maryland, PRFC, and Virginia. States will then submit implementation plans for Board consideration by January 1, 2025, and must implement the new measures by April 1, 2025. If States in the Northern Region cannot come to a consensus on which measures to implement, a virtual Board meeting will be scheduled to select measures.

[Additional Cobia Management Information](#)

[Additional Information about the Proposed Options](#)

Table 1. Management options estimated to achieve at least a 15.9% reduction in harvest for the Northern Region. Note: The 2-fish vessel limit options assume the upper bound increase of RI-DE harvest due to increasing their vessel limit (2.5% increase to regional harvest). NJ will not have to implement a season. The season will only be enforced in MD and VA.

Size Limit for RI-VA (TL)	Vessel Limit for RI-VA	Season for MD-VA*	Total Estimated Cumulative Reduction
NJ MFC Preferred Options:			
40" minimum	1-fish	June 8 – September 15, OR June 15 – September 22	-16.6%
40" minimum	2-fish	June 15 – August 25**	-16.7%
40" - 51" slot	2-fish	June 15 – September 15	-16.4%
Region Preferred Option:			
43" minimum	2-fish	June 15 – September 20	-16.3%
Other Available Options:			
40" minimum	2-fish	June 30 – September 15	-24.40%
41" minimum	2-fish	June 15 – August 31, OR June 27 – September 15	-17.5% -17.1%
42" minimum	2-fish	June 15 – August 31, OR June 27 – September 15	-20.4% -20.1%
43" minimum	2-fish	June 15 – September 15	-20.5%
40" - 52" slot	2-fish	June 15 – August 31, OR June 20 – September 15	-23.4% -17.3%
40" - 54" slot	2-fish	June 15 – August 31 OR June 27 – September 15	-19.3% -18.9%
40" - 55" slot	2-fish	June 15 – August 27, OR June 30 – September 15***	-18.3% -27.4%
41" - 52" slot	2-fish	June 15 – September 15	-19.1%
42" - 54" slot	2-fish	June 15 – September 15	-17.8%

*Seasons implemented for RI, NY, NJ, DE would not be credited toward reduction due to lack of data for analysis.

**All options in the table, including this end date of August 25 were calculated assuming the upper bound of RI-DE increasing their vessel limit (2.5%). If the average 1.3% increase for RI-DE increasing their vessel limit was applied, this season end date could be August 27 with a cumulative estimated reduction of 16.0%.

***All options in the table, including this start date of June 30 were calculated assuming the upper bound of RI-DE increasing their vessel limit (2.5%). If the average 1.3% increase for RI-DE increasing their vessel limit was applied, the season start date would be one day earlier on June 29 with a cumulative estimated reduction of 16.1%.