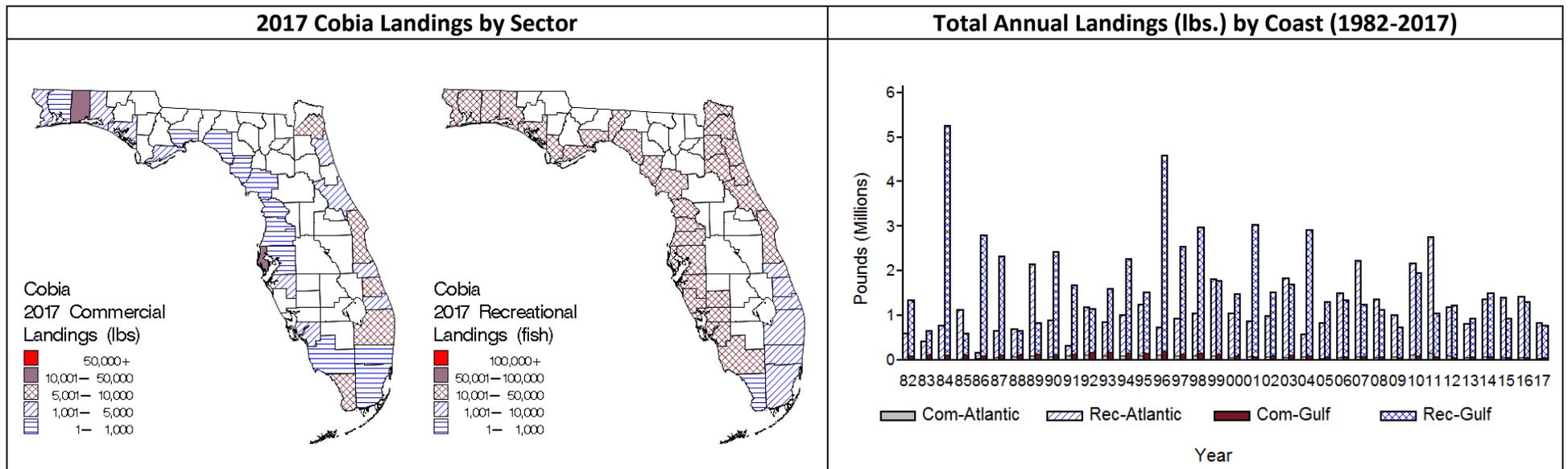


Cobia, *Rachycentron canadum* (Linnaeus, 1766)



Life History

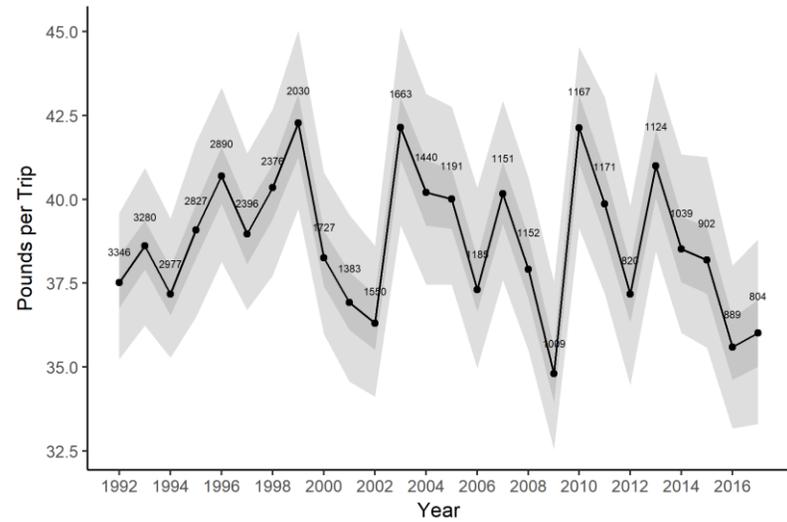
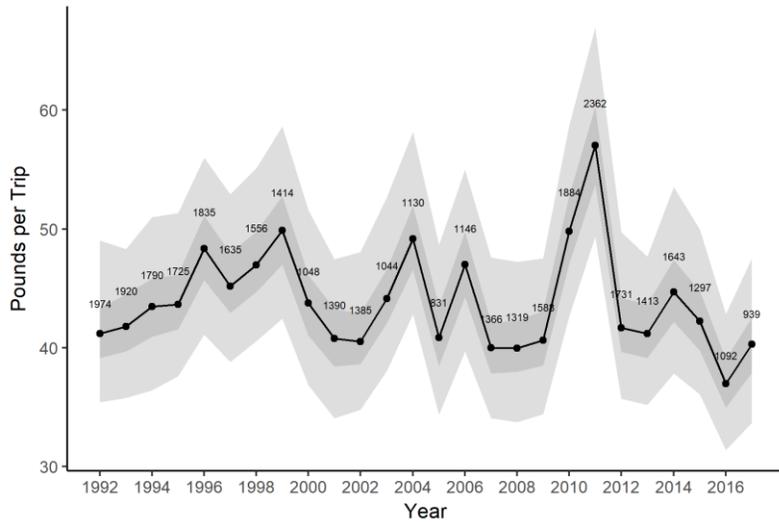
Cobia is a pelagic fish distributed worldwide in tropical, subtropical, and warm-temperate waters. In the western Atlantic, cobia are found from Nova Scotia to Argentina and are abundant in U.S. waters from Virginia south through the Gulf of Mexico. Along the Atlantic coast, cobia move south and offshore in response to dropping water temperatures during the late fall and winter. Cobia found in the northeastern gulf during the summer move to south Florida waters in the winter (Shaffer and Nakamura 1989), possibly overwintering near the Florida Keys (Franks *et al.* 1992). Cobia are multiple spawners, spawning from May to September in Florida waters. The smallest females with vitellogenic eggs were over 32.8 inches fork length (FL) and 2 years old in the northern gulf (Lotz *et al.* 1996) and off North Carolina (Smith 1995). Cobia appear to grow more quickly and reach larger sizes in the Gulf of Mexico than off the U.S. South Atlantic coast (Burns *et al.* 1998; Franks *et al.* 1999). In the northern gulf, males were about 27.9 inches FL at age 1 and 45.5 inches at age 9; females were 28.1 inches FL at age 1 and 57.5 inches FL at age 9 (Franks *et al.* 1999). Off North Carolina, males were about 22.0 inches FL at age 1 and 40.6 inches at age 9; females were 24.0 inches FL at age 1 and 48.8 inches FL at age 9 (Smith 1995). Observed maximum ages were 9 and 11 years for males and females in the northern Gulf of Mexico and 14 and 13 years for males and females off North Carolina. Cobia are strong, aggressive feeders that opportunistically feed on fish, squid, and crustaceans (Franks *et al.* 1996).



Fishers landed 1,585,921 pounds in 2017 which were 33.5% lower than the previous 5-year average (2012-2016). Coastwide, 52% of these were from the Atlantic and 48% were from the Atlantic. Recreational landings constituted 95% of the total landings.

Atlantic Coast

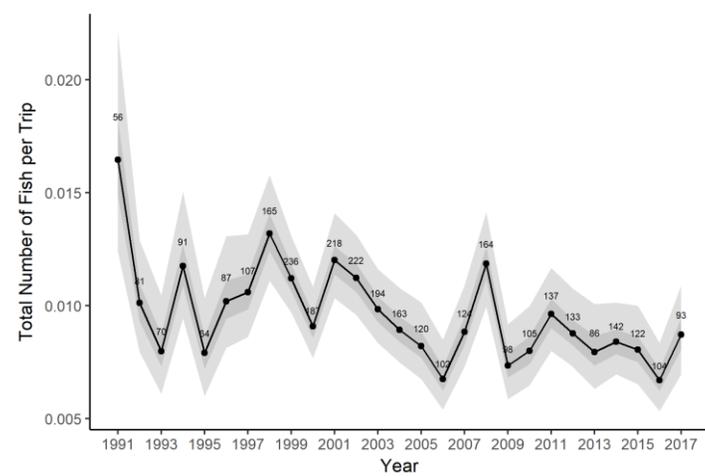
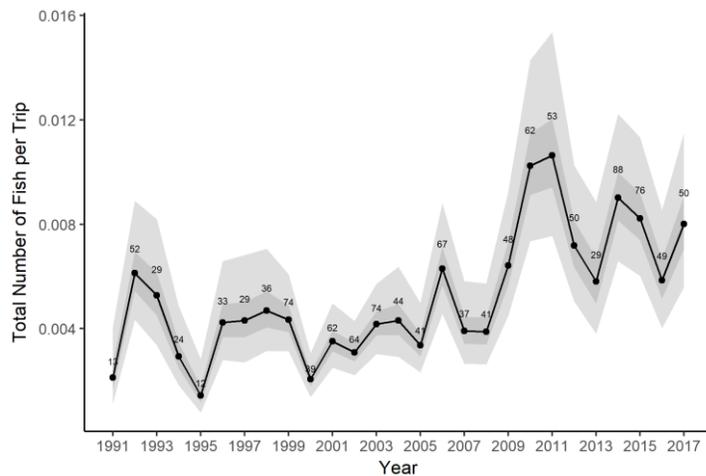
Gulf Coast



Standardized Commercial Catch Rates: Atlantic coast commercial catch rates have varied without trend through 2017 with a notable high in 2011. Likewise, Gulf coast commercial landings rates have varied widely without trend since 1992. Rates then declined in trend through 2017. Dark grey figure lines represent first and third quartiles while the light grey lines represent the 2.5% – 97.5% quantiles.

Atlantic Coast

Gulf Coast



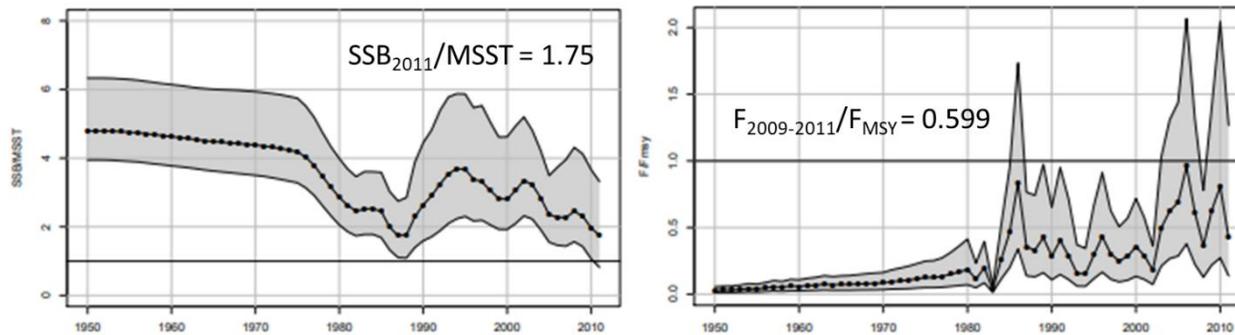
Standardized Recreational Total Catch Rates: Total catch rates for recreational anglers on the Atlantic coast have fluctuated with an overall increasing trend, peaking in 2011. On the Gulf, total catch rates have varied with general decline since 2001. Dark grey figure lines represent first and third quartiles while the light grey lines represent the 2.5% – 97.5% quantiles.

Stock Status

Current Condition: South Atlantic – not overfished nor undergoing overfishing; Gulf of Mexico – stock status indeterminate (SEDAR 28 2013)

Management History: In Florida, the recreational and commercial minimum size limit is 33 inches fork length. On the Atlantic coast there is a recreational limit of 1 fish per day (2 fish per day in federal waters; 2 fish per day commercial fishery limit) or 6 per vessel (whichever is less). On the Gulf in both state and federal waters, there is a 1 fish per day or 2 per vessel (whichever is less) limit. In 2013, a SEDAR stock assessment on both Atlantic and Gulf populations indicated overfishing was not occurring and neither stock was overfished. However, due to a lack of consensus among Gulf assessment reviewers, no population benchmarks could be established and no clear status determination could be made. ACLs were established as a precautionary measure to prevent the stocks from reaching an overfished status. Despite the stock status, the last assessment showed a general decline in spawning stock biomass since 2002 with recent year increases. The next benchmark assessment for Atlantic Cobia is currently ongoing under SEDAR 58.

South Atlantic Cobia (SEDAR 28 2013)



Gulf of Mexico Cobia (SEDAR 28 2013)

