



JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

FF-4-2026

PROCLAMATION

RE: COBIA – COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL – COASTAL AND JOINT FISHING WATERS

This proclamation supersedes proclamation FF-2-2025 dated December 16, 2024. This proclamation opens the commercial cobia fishery beginning at 12:01 A.M. on January 1, 2026. The season for the recreational harvest of cobia will re-open at 12:01 A.M. on May 1, 2026.

Kathy B. Rawls, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries, hereby announces that effective **at 12:01 A.M., January 1, 2026**, the following restrictions will apply to the cobia fishery in Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters:

I. COMMERCIAL SIZE AND HARVEST LIMIT

- A. It shall be unlawful to possess cobia less than 36 inches fork length in a commercial operation.
- B. It shall be unlawful to possess more than two (2) cobia per person per day or six (6) per vessel per day, whichever is more restrictive in a commercial operation.
- C. It shall be unlawful to possess a commercial and recreational limit of cobia on the same vessel.
- D. The commercial fishery will close by proclamation once the quota is met or projected to be met, or December 31, 2026, whichever occurs first.

II. RECREATIONAL SEASON, HARVEST, VESSEL, AND SIZE LIMIT

A. RECREATIONAL SIZE LIMIT, POSSESSION LIMIT, AND SEASON

1. The season for the recreational harvest of cobia will be **May 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026. It shall be unlawful to possess cobia outside of this season.**
2. It shall be unlawful to possess for a recreational purpose cobia less than **36 inches fork length.**
3. It shall be unlawful to possess for a recreational purpose more than **one (1) cobia per person per day** (See section B and C below for season and vessel limits).

B. PRIVATE VESSEL LIMITS for Recreational Purpose (All vessels not engaged in a For-Hire Vessel operation)

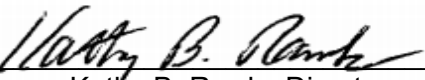
1. From **May 1 – June 30**, it shall be unlawful to possess more than **two (2) cobia per vessel per day** if two or more persons are onboard or one (1) cobia per person per day, if there is only one person on board.
2. From **July 1 – December 31**, it shall be unlawful to possess more than **one (1) cobia per vessel per day.**

C. **FOR-HIRE VESSEL (While engaged in a For-Hire Vessel operation as defined by G.S 113-174)**

1. From **May 1 – December 31**, it shall be unlawful to possess more than **four (4) cobia per vessel per day** or (1) cobia per person per day, if fewer than four (4) people are on board.

III. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- A. This proclamation is issued under the authority of N.C.G.S. 113-134; 113.134.1; 113-170.4; 113-170.5; 113-182; 113-182.1; 113-221.1; 143B-289.52; and N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rules 15A NCAC 03H .0103 and 03M .0512.
- B. It is unlawful to violate the provisions of any proclamation issued by the Fisheries Director under their delegated authority pursuant to N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Rule 15A NCAC 03H.0103.
- C. Fishermen are encouraged to return all cobia not meeting harvest requirements to the water in a manner that ensures that highest likelihood of survival.
- D. The intent of this proclamation is to manage the commercial and recreational fishery for cobia in Coastal Fishing Waters consistent with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Interstate Cobia Fishery Management Plan.
- E. Contact the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, P.O. Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557; phone 252-515-5500 or 800-682-2632 for more information or visit the division website at <https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries>.
- F. In accordance with N.C.G.S. 113-221.1(c) all persons who may be affected by proclamations issued by the Fisheries Director are under a duty to keep themselves informed of current proclamations.
- G. **This proclamation opens the commercial cobia fishery beginning at 12:01 A.M. on January 1, 2026. The season for the recreational harvest of cobia will re-open at 12:01 A.M. on May 1, 2026.**

By: 
Kathy B. Rawls, Director
DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES

December 12, 2025
10:45 A.M.