



## Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901

Phone: 302-674-2331 | FAX: 302-674-5399 | www.mafmc.org

Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | P. Weston Townsend, Vice Chairman

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

# MEMORANDUM

**Date:** March 3, 2022  
**To:** Chris Moore, Executive Director  
**From:** José Montañez, Staff  
**Subject:** Golden Tilefish 2023 Specifications Review/Revise

In 2021, the Council set specifications for 2022, 2023, and 2024 fishing years. As part of the 2022-2024 multiyear specification process for golden tilefish, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), the Tilefish Monitoring Committee (MC), and the Council will review the most recent information to determine whether modifications to the current 2023 specifications set by the Council are warranted.

From 2017 to 2021, commercial landings have been relatively stable, ranging from 1.4 (2020) to 1.6 (2018) million pounds (Table 1). In 2021, 1.5 million pounds of tilefish were landed. On average, for the last 5 years, the bulk of the tilefish quota has been landed (90.5 percent).

The latest results of the management track assessment received in June 2021, indicate that the tilefish resource was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in the assessment terminal year (2020; Nitschke 2021). The 2020 stock (23.28 million pounds or 10,562 mt) was at 96% of the updated biomass target reference point ( $SSB_{MSY} \text{ proxy} = SSB_{40\%} = 24.23$  million pounds or 10,995 mt). The fishing mortality rate (F) in 2020 was 0.160, 39% below the fishing mortality updated threshold reference point  $F_{MSY} \text{ proxy} = F_{40\%} = 0.261$ .

This year, we are not receiving a golden tilefish data update from the NEFSC. This is due to various timing and logistical constraints. More notable is that while preliminary landings data are available in CAMS (Catch Accounting and Monitoring System project)<sup>1</sup> they are still being vetted. Next year, Council staff expects that a data update for golden tilefish will be available.

Tilefish Advisors indicated that CPUE increased in 2021. More fish are being caught with the same effort than were caught in 2020. Fishermen indicated a good mix of fish in 2021, perhaps better than in previous years (both in terms of weight and landings mix). The overall catch of small/kittens is increasing for some of the Montauk and Barnegat Light vessels and a larger amount of small/kittens (2 to 3.5 pounds) were present in 2021 compared to previous years. In addition, industry feels that biomass is increasing and they see multiple year classes being recruited into the

---

<sup>1</sup> This is an initiative that aims to create one shared catch accounting and monitoring system for quota monitoring and assessment needs.

fishery. Overall, a positive trend is evident and CPUE is increasing as a result. Golden tilefish landings by market category for the 2017-2021 period are shown in Table 2.

Based on a review of this information, staff recommend no change to the 2023 fishing year specifications. In 2023, the SSC, MC, and Council will review the 2023 data update for golden tilefish, the Advisory Panel Information Document, the 2023 Fishery Performance Report, and other relevant information to support the specifications review for 2024 fishing year. In addition, a golden tilefish research track stock assessment is scheduled for spring of 2024 and this research track assessment will be used to set management measures for the next specifications cycle.

**Table 1.** Summary of management measures and landings for fishing year 2007-2024.<sup>a</sup>

| Management Measures                  | 2007   | 2008   | 2009   | 2010           | 2011           | 2012           | 2013           | 2014           | 2015           | 2016           | 2017           | 2018           | 2019           | 2020           | 2021             | 2022           | 2023           | 2024           |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| ABC (m lb)                           | -      | -      | -      | -              | -              | -              | 2.013          | 2.013          | 1.766          | 1.898          | 1.898          | 1.636          | 1.636          | 1.636          | 1.636            | 1.964          | 1.964          | 1.964          |
| TAL (m lb)                           | 1.995  | 1.995  | 1.995  | 1.995          | 1.995          | 1.995          | 1.995          | 1.995          | 1.755          | 1.887          | 1.887          | 1.626          | 1.626          | 1.626          | 1.625            | 1.839          | 1.839          | 1.839          |
| Com. quota-<br>(m lb)                | 1.995  | 1.995  | 1.995  | 1.995          | 1.995          | 1.995          | 1.995          | 1.995          | 1.755          | 1.887          | 1.887          | 1.626          | 1.626          | 1.626          | 1.625/<br>1.672* | 1.839          | 1.839          | 1.839          |
| Com. landings                        | 1.794  | 1.689  | 1.906  | 2.021          | 1.924          | 1.873          | 1.840          | 1.826          | 1.351          | 1.051          | 1.501          | 1.624          | 1.563          | 1.403          | 1.546            | -              | -              | -              |
| Com. Overage /<br>underage<br>(m lb) | -0.201 | -0.306 | -0.089 | +0.026         | -0.071         | -0.122         | -0.155         | -0.169         | -0.404         | -0.836         | -0.387         | -0.003         | -0.064         | -0.223         | -0.125           | -              | -              | -              |
| Incidental trip<br>limit (lb)        | 300    | 300    | 300    | 300            | 300            | 500            | 500            | 500            | 500            | 500            | 500            | 500            | 500            | 500            | 500              | 500            | 500            | 500            |
| Rec. possession<br>limit             | -      | -      | -      | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup>   | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup> | 8 <sup>b</sup> |

<sup>a</sup> Source: NMFS unpublished dealer data. From 2001 to 2021, fishing year = November 1 – October 31 period. For example, 2007 fishing year = November 1, 2006 – October 31, 2007. For 2022, proposed fishing year = November 1, 2021 – December 31, 2022. For 2023 on, proposed fishing year = January 1 – December 31. <sup>b</sup> Eight fish per person per trip. \*The Council requested for emergency action to allow unharvested 2020 IFQ pounds to be carried over into the 2021 fishing year, up to 5 percent of the quota shareholders initial 2020 allocation.

**Table 2.** Golden tilefish landings (landed weight) by market category and year, from Maine through Virginia, 2017-2021 (calendar year).

| Market category<br>(Approximate market size<br>range in pounds) | 2017             |               | 2018             |               | 2019             |               | 2020             |               | 2021             |               |
|---|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|
|   | Pounds           | % of<br>total | Pounds           | % of<br>total | Pounds           | % of<br>total | Pounds           | % of<br>total | Pounds           | % of<br>total |
| Extra-large (> 25)  | 52,400           | 4%            | 40,278           | 3%            | 32,808           | 2%            | 19,307           | 2%            | 13,825           | 1%            |
| Large (7-24)  | 307,696          | 22%           | 219,103          | 15%           | 281,749          | 20%           | 386,285          | 30%           | 365,644          | 25%           |
| Large/medium (5-7)  | 86,240           | 6%            | 141,623          | 10%           | 262,095          | 19%           | 271,247          | 21%           | 168,614          | 12%           |
| Medium (3.5-5)  | 266,837          | 19%           | 468,097          | 32%           | 590,681          | 42%           | 408,220          | 32%           | 439,176          | 30%           |
| Small/kittens (2-3.5)   | 605,492          | 43%           | 575,511          | 39%           | 223,055          | 16%           | 154,984          | 12%           | 416,813          | 29%           |
| Extra small (< 2)   | 70,286           | 5%            | 14,958           | 1%            | 9,954            | 1%            | 23,360           | 2%            | 8,365            | 1%            |
| Unclassified  | 18,563           | 1%            | 14,482           | 1%            | 11,700           | 1%            | 19,130           | 1%            | 32,451           | 2%            |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>1,407,514</b> | <b>100%</b>   | <b>1,474,052</b> | <b>100%</b>   | <b>1,412,042</b> | <b>100%</b>   | <b>1,282,533</b> | <b>100%</b>   | <b>1,444,888</b> | <b>100%</b>   |

Source: NMFS unpublished dealer data.

## **References**

Nitschke, P. 2021. Golden Tilefish, *Lopholatilus chamaeleonticeps*, Management Track Assessment through 2020 in the Middle Atlantic-Southern New England Region. NMFS/NEFSC, Woods Hole, MA. <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2021/ssc-july-21-23>