



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
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Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | P. Weston Townsend, Vice Chairman
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MEMORANDUM

Date: September 23, 2022
To: Council
From: Hannah Hart and José Montañez, Council staff
Subject: Update on Private Recreational Tilefish (Golden and Blueline) Permitting and Reporting

The Council will receive a presentation from the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office on the status of private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting on Wednesday, October 5, 2022, from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. This presentation will include information related to the number of permits issued, landings, reporting systems, and lessons learned since the requirement was initially implemented. The Council will also discuss communication and outreach efforts to date and identify additional needs to ensure angler awareness and compliance with permitting and reporting requirements.

Background

In August 2020, NOAA Fisheries implemented mandatory permitting and reporting requirements for private vessels fishing for tilefish (both blueline and golden) north of the North Carolina/Virginia border. Under the new requirements, private recreational vessels (including for-hire operators using their vessels for non-charter, recreational trips) must obtain a federal vessel permit to target and/or retain golden or blueline tilefish. These vessel operators are also required to submit vessel trip reports electronically within 24 hours of returning to port for trips where tilefish were targeted or retained. These measures were approved by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in order to gather necessary recreational tilefish catch and effort data that are not currently captured through dockside interviews and/or angler phone surveys.

As of October 2021, 814 private recreational tilefish permits had been issued. During the 2021 fishing year (January – December), anglers reported 24 trips landing a total of 199 golden tilefish, and 34 trips landing a total of 319 blueline tilefish.

Communication and Outreach Efforts

Council members and stakeholders have expressed concern that some vessel operators may not be aware of the new permitting and reporting requirements. To address these concerns, the Council has encouraged both Council and NOAA fisheries staff to conduct additional outreach to improve public awareness of the tilefish permitting and reporting requirements, encourage compliance, and educate anglers on the reporting systems available to submit electronic vessel trip reports.

GARFO and Council staff have already conducted substantial outreach to inform stakeholders about the new requirements. GARFO developed flyers, rack cards, posters, and tabletop displays for distribution at fishing shows and outreach events attended by port agents. Rack cards were also distributed to tackle shops along the coast. Information was distributed to NOAA Fisheries contacts via the April 2020 NOAA Navigator and several email announcements and reminders. The Council developed an [informational web page](#) to house all resources and updates related to recreational tilefish permitting and reporting. Council staff also hosted a training webinar in April 2020 which provided participants with demonstrations of how to apply for permits and use the reporting apps. Four email announcements about the new requirements were sent to the Council's general email list between April 2020 and April 2021. The Council has also worked with Fish Rules (fishing app) to update the tilefish regulations.

The Council's Communication and Outreach Advisory Panel and Tilefish Advisory Panel are scheduled to meet jointly on September 28 to provide feedback on potential next steps and ways to improve angler awareness of, and compliance with, the tilefish permitting and reporting requirements. **A summary of the joint AP meeting will be posted as a supplemental document on the October 2022 Council Meeting page.**