



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
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Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | P. Weston Townsend, Vice Chairman
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 24, 2023
To: Dr. Chris Moore, Executive Director
From: Hannah Hart and José Montañez, Council staff
Subject: Golden Tilefish Survey Update and Expansion of South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey

Golden Tilefish Survey

The 2023 golden tilefish fishery independent bottom longline survey will take place in Mid-June to early July. This 14-day survey was designed using the results from the pilot golden and blueline tilefish survey conducted in the summer of 2017 and builds on the golden tilefish survey conducted in the summer of 2020. The goal of the 2023 fishery independent bottom longline survey is to extend the timeseries to derive an index of abundance for the golden tilefish stock and collect other biological information to support the golden tilefish stock assessment. The survey will be conducted by Dr. Jill Olin, assistant professor at Michigan Technical University. PI Olin will be responsible for project design with NOAA-NEFSC personnel, and all work proposed. For continuity purposes, the same commercial vessel and crew that assisted in prior surveys will be used to conduct the 2023 survey.

Expansion of South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey

Background

The South Atlantic Deepwater Longline (SADL) survey is a cooperative survey with industry that targets several deepwater snapper/grouper species, including blueline tilefish, in waters from the North Carolina/Virginia border to the Florida Keys. The objective of the survey is to generate indices of abundance and collect biological information to support stock assessments and management of several federally managed stocks. The survey was initially conducted in 2020 and since then has occurred annually.

Although blueline tilefish along the Atlantic coast makes up a single population, the stock is split into two management areas, a Mid-Atlantic management area north of the North Carolina/ Virginia border and a South Atlantic management area from North Carolina to Florida, so that each Council can set their own specifications. There is currently no stock status information relevant to the Mid-Atlantic management area due to insufficient data. The expansion of the SADL north into Mid-Atlantic waters will allow scientists and managers to collect information on blueline tilefish throughout its range as well as monitor potential distribution shifts of other deepwater species.

Proposed Expanded SADL Survey

The proposed expanded survey would utilize the same methodology used in the south Atlantic, but the areas fished would include waters off Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and New Jersey (Figure 1).

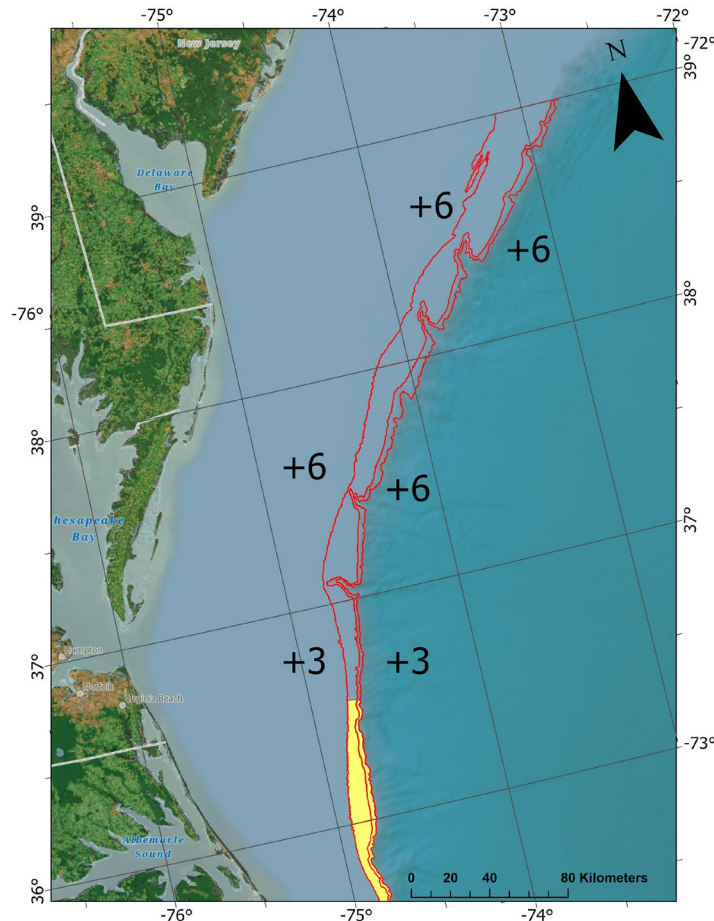


Figure 1. 2023 proposed northern extent of the SADL survey shown by the red outlined area. Proposed northern extent extends to 39 degrees north to approximately Delaware Bay/Wilmington Canyon. The distance from shore (+/- 10 km) will be approximately 90 km to 160 km depending on depth and latitude. Yellow shaded area shows the current northern survey boundary at the NC/VA boarder.

Based on catches from the Mid-Atlantic 2017 Pilot Tilefish Survey and a 2015 South Atlantic Cooperative Research Project, the proposed area would encompass the range of the Atlantic blueline tilefish stock and meet up with the southernmost latitude fished in the Mid-Atlantic Golden Tilefish Survey. More information related to the background, methods, and 2020-2021 SADL results can be found [here](#).

The Council has committed to funding the expansion of the SADL north in 2023 and is coordinating with staff from the Southeast Fishery Science Center, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and Northeast Fishery Science Center on survey logistics and permitting requirements.