



Blueline Tilefish Fishery Performance Report

February 2022

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Tilefish Advisory Panel (AP) met via webinar on February 24, 2022 to review the Blueline Tilefish Fishery Information Document and develop the following Fishery Performance Report. The primary purpose of this report is to contextualize catch histories by providing information about fishing effort, market trends, environmental changes, and other factors. The trigger questions listed below were posed to the AP to generate discussion of observations in the blueline tilefish fishery. Please note: Advisor comments described below are not necessarily consensus or majority statements.

Advisory Panel members present: Fred Akers (Private), Daniel Farnham Jr. (Commercial), Carl Forsberg (For-Hire/Commercial), Gregory Hueth (Private/For-hire), Michael Johnson (Commercial), and Laurie Nolan (Commercial).

Others present: Wes Townsend (Council), Paul Nitschke (NEFSC), Daniel Farnham Sr. (Council Member), Scott Lenox (Council Member), Joe Cimino (Council Member), Doug Potts (GARFO), Lee Anderson (SSC), Jason Didden (Council Staff), and José Montañez (Council Staff).

Trigger questions

1. What factors have influenced recent catch (markets/economy, environment, regulations, other factors)?
2. Are the current fishery regulations appropriate? How could they be improved?
3. What would you recommend as research priorities?
4. What else is important for the Council to know?

Factors Influencing Catch

Low quota and trip limits constrain effort/landings. Blueline trip limits generally discourage directed fishing.

Maryland landings – an advisor was aware of a vessel or two out of Ocean City, Maryland that target tilefish that could be responsible for the Maryland landings.

Recreational catch estimate volatility continues to be an issue – there's not much faith in the year to year catch estimates.

Staff needs to check the VTR gear-based table – does not appear to total correctly.

Market/Economic Conditions

Blueline price is sufficient to drive effort – but most activity is fill-in trips given limited quota/trip limits.

Some participants can put together a directed trip by mixing blueline, goldens, and other fish – but not worth it for a directed trip just for bluelines given costs.

Management Issues

See above catch factor - low quota and trip limits constrain effort/landings.

Blueline limit allows balancing of golden tilefish for some combined incidental golden tilefish fishing. Two advisors suggested there should be further analysis of directed fishing at the current blueline trip limit and golden incidental limits, which were generally designed to cover incidental landings but can be combined currently to create a directed trip.

The 3-fish private limit discourages private directed effort, at least in NJ.

NOAA should have a link or reference to the Tilefish permit requirement on their HMS permit renewal website. Almost every private vessel fishing deep enough to catch tilefish has an HMS permit. I have made this comment before. I renewed my HMS permit for this year, and there was no reference to the tilefish permit requirement. There have been recurring complaints that many private vessels are fishing for tilefish without the permit. NOAA and MAFMC are missing an important outreach opportunity by not putting a reference to the tilefish permit on the HMS permit shop website.

Research Priorities (no input provided)

Public Input

Direct to consumer businesses may be responsible for MD landings.