



**Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council**

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

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

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** January 26, 2024  
**To:** Council  
**From:** Chris Moore, Executive Director  
**Subject:** Executive Director's Report

The following materials are enclosed for review during the Executive Director's Report at the February 2024 Council Meeting:

1. 2025 Council Meeting Schedule
2. 2024 Planned Council Meeting Topics
3. 2024 Planned Actions and Deliverables
4. 2024 Stock Assessment Schedule and Assessment Meeting Dates for MAFMC-Managed Species
5. Action Plan: Summer Flounder Commercial Mesh Size Exemptions Framework/Addenda
6. Action Plan: Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda
7. Agenda: Spiny Dogfish Ageing Workshop
8. New MAFMC Forage Web Page
9. Recreational Tilefish Permitting and Reporting Outreach/Program Evaluation:
  - a. Project Narrative: Improving Catch and Effort Data Collection from Recreational Tilefish Anglers
  - b. ACCSP Funding Letter
  - c. Outreach Poster/Handout
  - d. Project Narrative: Evaluation of MAFMC Private Recreational Tilefish Permitting and Reporting Program
10. NOAA Fisheries and BOEM Release Joint North Atlantic Right Whale and Offshore Wind Strategy



## 2025 Council Meeting Schedule

*(As of November 12, 2023)*

<b>February 11-12, 2025</b>	<b><i>(Virtual Meeting)</i></b>
<b>April 8 – 10, 2025</b>	
<b>June 10 – 12, 2025*</b> <b>(Last meeting for outgoing members)</b>	
<b>August 11 – 14, 2025*</b> <b>(New members sworn in on first day)</b>	
<b>October 7 – 9, 2025</b>	
<b>December 8 – 11, 2025</b>	



## 2024 Planned Council Meeting Topics

### **February 6 – 8, 2024 Council Meeting – Arlington, VA**

- Joint MAFMC/NEFMC Framework to Reduce Atlantic Sturgeon Interactions in the Monkfish/Dogfish Gillnet Fisheries: approve final range of alternatives
- Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Species Separation Requirements Amendment: approve public hearing document
- Legal Review, Financial Disclosure, and Recusal Training (NOAA Office of General Counsel, Northeast)
- Offshore Wind Update
- Black Sea Bass Research Track Assessment Overview
- NEFSC Industry-Based Survey White Paper

### **April 9 – 11, 2024 Council Meeting – Atlantic City, NJ**

- Joint MAFMC/NEFMC Framework to Reduce Atlantic Sturgeon Interactions in the Monkfish/Dogfish Gillnet Fisheries: final action
- Summer Flounder Commercial Mesh Exemptions Framework Meeting #1 (with ASMFC SFSBSB Board)
- 2024 Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) Risk Assessment Report
- 2024 State of the Ecosystem Report
- Golden Tilefish Research Track Assessment Overview
- Habitat Activities Update (GARFO-HESD)
- NTAP Proposal for Industry-Based Survey Pilot Program: review
- Golden Tilefish Catch Share Program Review: review public comments and discuss next steps

### **June 4 – 6, 2024 Council Meeting – Riverhead, NY**

- Advisory Panel Reappointments (Executive Committee)
- 2025-2029 Strategic Plan: discuss vision, mission, goals (Executive Committee)
- Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda: update (with ASMFC Policy Board)
- Summer Flounder Commercial Mesh Exemptions Framework Meeting #2 (with ASMFC SFSBSB Board)
- 2025 Atlantic Mackerel Specifications: review
- 2025 Chub Mackerel Specifications: review
- 2025 Longfin Squid Specifications: review
- 2025 *Illex* Squid Specifications: review
- Unmanaged Commercial Landings Report
- SSC's Overfishing Limit (OFL) Coefficient of Variation (CV) Guidance Document: review and approve updates

### **August 12 – 15, 2024 Council Meeting – Philadelphia, PA**

- 2025 Atlantic Surfclam Specifications: review
- 2025 Ocean Quahog Specifications: review
- Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda: approve public hearing document (with ASMFC Policy Board)
- 2025 Black Sea Bass Specifications: approve (with ASMFC SFSBSB Board)
- 2025 Summer Flounder Specifications: review (with ASMFC SFSBSB Board)
- 2025 Scup Specifications: review (with ASMFC SFSBSB Board)
- 2025 Bluefish Specifications and Recreational Management Measures: review (with ASMFC Bluefish Board)
- 2025-2026 Butterfish Specifications: approve
- 2025-2027 Golden Tilefish Specifications: approve
- 2025 Blueline Tilefish Specifications: approve
- Draft 2025-2029 Strategic Plan: review (Executive Committee)
- Council Program Review: review final report

### **October 8 – 10, 2024 Council Meeting – Dewey Beach, DE**

- 2025 Implementation Plan: review draft deliverables (Executive Committee)
- 2025-2029 Strategic Plan: approve
- Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Species Separation Requirements Amendment: final action
- Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment: approve public hearing document
- 2025 Spiny Dogfish Specifications: review
- Recreational Tilefish Permitting and Reporting Update (GARFO)
- Tilefish Angler Outreach and Program Evaluation: review report and discuss next steps
- Habitat Activities Update (GARFO-HESD)
- Offshore Wind Update
- Scientific Coordination Subcommittee 8<sup>th</sup> National Workshop Outcomes

### **December 9 – 12, 2024 Council Meeting – Annapolis, MD**

- 2025 Black Sea Bass Recreational Management Measures: approve (with ASMFC SFSBSB Board)
- 2025 Summer Flounder Recreational Management Measures: review (with ASMFC SFSBSB Board)
- 2025 Scup Recreational Management Measures: review (with ASMFC SFSBSB Board)
- Recreational Sector Separation Amendment: approve scoping document (with ASMFC Policy Board)
- 2025-2029 Council Research Priorities: approve
- 2025 Implementation Plan: approve
- River Herring Data Portal Project: review
- Ricks E Savage Award Nominations (Executive Committee)
- Overview of National Fishing Effects Database
- 2024 EAFM Risk Assessment Report Updates: review

# 2024 PROPOSED ACTIONS AND DELIVERABLES

This section provides an overview of the activities, amendments, frameworks, specifications, and other projects the Council expects to initiate, continue, or complete during the year. These activities are organized by Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and topic area. See the Appendix for additional details about the proposed deliverables.

*Note: Asterisks (\*) denote contractor-supported projects.*

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## SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP, BLACK SEA BASS

1. 2025 black sea bass specifications
2. 2025 summer flounder and scup specifications review
3. 2025 black sea bass recreational management measures
4. 2025 summer flounder and scup recreational management measures review
5. Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda (continuing)
6. Recreational Sector Separation and Recreational Catch Accounting Amendment (continuing)
7. Advisory panel fishery performance reports
8. Black sea bass management track assessment support
9. Summer Flounder commercial mesh exemption framework
10. Scup bycatch prediction and avoidance modeling and research\*

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## BLUEFISH

11. 2025 bluefish specifications review
12. 2025 bluefish recreational management measures review
13. Advisory panel fishery performance report

*Note: Items 5 and 6 in the previous section will also address bluefish recreational management issues*

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## GOLDEN AND BLUELINE TILEFISH

14. 2025-2027 golden tilefish specifications
15. 2025 blueline tilefish specifications
16. Advisory panel fishery performance reports
17. Update on private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting performance
18. Development of strategies to improve compliance with recreational tilefish permitting and reporting requirements\*
19. Blueline tilefish operational assessment support
20. Golden tilefish research track assessment support
21. Golden tilefish management track assessment support
22. South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey expansion into Mid-Atlantic waters\*

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## MACKEREL, SQUID, BUTTERFISH (MSB)

23. 2025-2026 butterfish specifications
24. 2025 Atlantic mackerel, chub mackerel, longfin squid, and *Illex* squid specifications review
25. Advisory panel fishery performance reports
26. Butterfish management track assessment support
27. Longfin squid research track assessment support\*

- 28. Longfin squid biological sampling project\*
- 29. Squid modeling project\*

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## RIVER HERRING AND SHAD (RH/S)

- 30. RH/S run data portal development project\*
- 31. RH/S bycatch prediction and avoidance modeling and research\*

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## SPINY DOGFISH

- 32. 2025 spiny dogfish specifications review
- 33. Advisory panel fishery performance report
- 34. Spiny dogfish ageing project\*
- 35. Spiny dogfish ageing workshop
- 36. Joint framework action to reduce Atlantic sturgeon bycatch in the monkfish and spiny dogfish fisheries (final action)

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## SURFCLAM AND OCEAN QUAHOG (SCOQ)

- 37. 2025 surfclam and ocean quahog specifications review
- 38. Advisory panel fishery performance reports
- 39. Atlantic surfclam management track assessment support
- 40. SCOQ electronic monitoring project\*
- 41. Supplemental surfclam genetics project\*
- 42. Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Species Separation Requirements Amendment (continuing)

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## SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

- 43. 2025-2029 Council research priorities
- 44. Updates to the SSC's Overfishing Limit (OFL) Coefficient of Variation (CV) Guidance Document
- 45. Supplemental port biological sampling\*
- 46. Mid-Atlantic fish ageing project\*
- 47. Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP) coordination and facilitation

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## ECOSYSTEM AND OCEAN PLANNING/HABITAT

- 48. Joint Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Council offshore wind web page management
- 49. Council comments on habitat and fishery issues related to offshore energy development
- 50. 2024 Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) risk assessment report
- 51. National Fishing Effects Database project\*
- 52. Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment (continuing)
- 53. Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (NRHA) maintenance and integration of products
- 54. Comments on Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) applications for Forage Amendment Ecosystem Component species (e.g., thread herring EFP application review)

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## GENERAL

- 55. 2025-2029 Strategic Plan
- 56. Reappointment of all advisory panels
- 57. Update on commercial landings of unmanaged species (including consideration of possible landings thresholds for further evaluation for management)

58. Participation on Council Coordination Committee Working Groups and Subcommittees (Habitat, Area-Based Management, Climate Change, Legislative, ESA/MSA Coordination, Equity and Environmental Justice, Council Member Ongoing Development)
59. Participation on marine mammal take reduction teams and protected resources working groups
60. Activities related to Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certifications/audits for Council-managed fisheries (i.e., respond to requests for information)
61. Legislative issue tracking (including development of comments upon request)
62. Review of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) utility and its use for enforcement (in coordination with NEFMC)

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## CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND GOVERNANCE

63. Program review of Council/GARFO processes for fishery management action development\*
64. Evaluation of Council committee structure, use, and decision making (in collaboration with other East coast Councils; addresses scenario planning potential action G1)
65. Activities related to Inflation Reduction Act funded-projects for climate-ready fisheries (proposal development and project management)

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## COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

66. Ongoing communication activities to support understanding and awareness of the Council and its managed fisheries (development of web resources, email announcements, press releases, YouTube videos, webinars, face-to-face meetings, printed and digital communication materials, etc.)
67. Outreach campaigns to increase stakeholder awareness and understanding of Council actions under development and opportunities for participation
68. Council website improvements (continuing)

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## STAFF WRAP-UP ON COMPLETED ACTIONS

*The following actions have been, or are expected to be, approved by the Council by the end of 2023 but will require staff work in 2024 to finalize for submission to NMFS:*

69. Completion/submission of any outstanding specifications packages for 2024

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## POSSIBLE ADDITIONS

*To be considered for addition to the 2024 implementation plan if time and resources allow:*

70. Action to authorize an experimental Atlantic surfclam fishery in the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area (HMA)
71. Development of spatial management options for Atlantic surfclam open water aquaculture in the New York Bight and central Atlantic
72. Framework to allow quota transfer between commercial and recreational sectors for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass
73. Action to implement "did not fish" reports for commercial, for-hire, and private tilefish permit holders
74. Coordination on Monkfish FMP actions initiated by the New England Council
75. Framework action to consider modifications to the commercial scup Gear Restricted Areas (GRA) or other measures to help reduce scup discards

# 2024

	Species/Topic	Stock Area	Management Organization(s)
<b>February</b> Research Track	Applying State Space Models		
<b>March</b> Research Track	Golden tilefish		MAFMC
<b>June</b> Management Track	Atlantic cod	Eastern Gulf of Maine	NEFMC
	Atlantic cod	Georges Bank	NEFMC
	Atlantic cod	Southern New England	NEFMC
	Atlantic cod	Western Gulf of Maine	NEFMC
	Atlantic herring		NEFMC, ASMFC
	Atlantic surfclam		MAFMC
	Black sea bass		MAFMC
	Butterfish		MAFMC, ASMFC
	Golden Tilefish		MAFMC
	Northern shrimp*		ASMFC
	Shad*		ASMFC
	Striped bass*		ASMFC
	Sturgeon*		ASMFC
<b>July</b> Joint US/Canada Assessments Transboundary Resources Assessment Committee (TRAC)	Atlantic cod	Eastern Georges Bank	NEFMC
	Haddock	Eastern Georges Bank	NEFMC
	Yellowtail flounder	Georges Bank	NEFMC
<b>September</b> Management Track	American plaice		NEFMC
	Atlantic halibut		NEFMC
	Haddock	Georges Bank	NEFMC
	Haddock	Gulf of Maine	NEFMC
	Pollock		NEFMC
	Witch flounder		NEFMC
<b>November</b> Research Track	Yellowtail flounder	Cape Cod / Gulf of Maine	NEFMC
		Southern New England / Mid-Atlantic	NEFMC
		Georges Bank [TRAC]	NEFMC

\* Stock assessments denoted with an asterisk are conducted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. All other assessments are conducted by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center.



# 2024 Assessment Dates for MAFMC Species

Golden Tilefish 2024 Research Track Assessment

- **March 11-15, 2024** – Peer Review Meeting

June 2024 Management Track Assessment

- **June 24-28, 2024** – Peer Review Meeting for MAFMC-Managed Species (Atlantic Surfclam, Black Sea Bass, Butterfish, Golden Tilefish)

Additional assessment information and meeting details can be found on the Council's website at <https://www.mafmc.org/stock-assessments>.



**Summer Flounder Commercial Mesh Size Exemptions Framework/Addenda  
Draft Action Plan**

January 2024

**Framework/Addenda Goal:** This management action is being developed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission)’s Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board (Board). This action will evaluate potential changes to two exemptions to the summer flounder commercial minimum mesh size requirements, including 1) the Small Mesh Exemption Program (SMEP), and 2) the flynet exemption. Consideration of these changes is intended to modernize these requirements with consideration of current fishing industry gear use and practices and to provide additional flexibility to fishery participants while continuing to meet the conservation objectives of the FMP.

**Alternatives to be Considered:** The Council and Board have identified the issues below for exploration through this action. They may also identify other alternatives to address the objectives of the action at future meetings.

- **Small Mesh Exemption Program Area Revisions:** This action will consider modifications to the area associated with the SMEP for summer flounder, including evaluating suggested revisions made by fishing industry representatives during the Fall 2023 review process for this exemption.
- **Flynet Exemption Gear Definition Updates:** This action will consider modifying the regulatory definition of a flynet as it relates to the flynet exemption to the summer flounder commercial minimum mesh size. Changes would be considered in light of changes in the use and configuration of commercial trawl gear since this exemption was put in place in the 1990s.
- **Other alternatives:** This action may consider other alternatives, as appropriate. For example, this could include potential revisions to the timing associated with the SMEP, or administrative requirements associated with either exemption.

**Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) / Plan Development Team (PDT)**

An FMAT/PDT is being formed to assist with development and analysis of potential alternatives. FMAT/PDT members are listed in the table below. Other Council, Commission, and NOAA Fisheries staff, as well as other experts, will be consulted as needed.

<b>FMAT/PDT Member Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Role/Expertise</b>
Kiley Dancy	Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Chelsea Tuohy	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Hannah Hart	Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Laura Deighan	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Fisheries policy and legal requirements
Emily Keiley	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Fisheries policy and legal requirements
Marianne Randall	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	National Environmental Policy Act requirements

Sara Turner	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Analysis and Program Support
TBD	NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center	Population dynamics
TBD	NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center	Observer program
TBD	NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center	Gear expertise (Consult as needed)

**Draft Timeline** – *Subject to change*

December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Council initiates framework action</li> </ul>
February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Board initiates addendum (February 14 webinar meeting)</li> </ul>
January-March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FMAT/PDT formed; first meeting(s)</li> <li>● Development of range of alternatives and draft document for meeting 1</li> </ul>
April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Framework/addendum meeting 1: approve range of alternatives; Board approves draft document for public hearings</li> </ul>
April/May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public comment period (30 days required for Commission addendum) and optional public hearings</li> </ul>
May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FMAT/PDT and Advisory Panel meetings to provide input to Council and Board prior to final action</li> </ul>
June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Framework/addendum meeting 2: final action</li> </ul>
Late Summer/Fall 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Development, review, and revisions of framework/addenda document(s)</li> <li>● Federal rulemaking</li> </ul>
November 1, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Effective date of implemented changes</li> </ul>



## Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda

### Draft Action Plan

January 2024

<https://www.mafmc.org/actions/rec-measures-framework-addenda>

**Framework/addenda goal:** This management action is being developed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission). This is a follow-on action to the [Recreational Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addenda](#), which implemented the Percent Change Approach for setting recreational management measures. In adopting the Percent Change Approach, the Council and the Commission’s Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) agreed it should sunset by the end of 2025 with the goal of considering an improved measures setting process, as developed through this management action, starting with 2026 measures.

**Alternatives to be considered:** During their June 2022 and August 2023 meetings, the Council and Policy Board agreed to further develop the following alternatives through this management action. They may also identify other alternatives to address the objectives of the action at future meetings.

- **Percent Change Approach** – This approach was implemented starting with the 2023 recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. It will also be used for bluefish once that stock is no longer under a rebuilding plan. Under the Percent Change Approach, a determination is made to either liberalize, restrict, or leave measures unchanged based on two factors: 1) Comparison of a confidence interval around an estimate of expected harvest under status quo measures to the average recreational harvest limit (RHL) for the upcoming two years and 2) Biomass compared to the target level, as defined by the most recent stock assessment. These two factors are used to define a target harvest level for setting management measures. The target is defined as a percentage difference from expected harvest under status quo measures. The Percent Change Approach is described in detail in the [reference guide](#) and [final framework document](#) for the previous action. The Council and Policy Board agreed that further development of this approach should, at a minimum, include greater consideration of fishing mortality. This could include development of approaches to assign fishing mortality rates and targets to the recreational fishery.
- **Biological Reference Point Approach and Biological Based Matrix Approach** - These alternatives use a combination of indicators to place the stock in one of multiple potential management measure “bins.” The indicators vary by alternative and include expected harvest under status quo measures, biomass compared to the target level, fishing mortality, recruitment, and/or trends in biomass. The intent is that bins associated with poor indicators would have more restrictive management measures and bins with positive indicators would have more liberal measures. These alternatives are described in more detail in the [reference guide](#) and [final framework document](#) for the previous action. The Council and Policy Board agreed that further development of these alternatives should at a minimum include development of example measures using modeling (e.g., the Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation model) or other approaches. In December 2023, the Council and the Policy Board agreed to modify these alternatives such that measures will no longer be assigned to all bins the first time either

approach is used through the specifications process. Further consideration will be given to the appropriate method for setting measures under these alternatives.

**Other topics to be considered:** During their June 2022 and August 2023 meetings, the Council and Policy Board agreed that the following additional topics should also be considered through this management action. These are not management alternatives; rather, they are topics that will be considered in the context of the management alternatives listed above.

- **Target metric for setting measures** – The previous framework/addenda considered if recreational measures in state and federal waters should collectively aim to achieve a target level of harvest (e.g., based on the RHL), recreational dead catch (e.g., based on the recreational annual catch limit), or fishing mortality. This will be further considered through this action.
- **Starting point for measures** – Many recreational stakeholders have expressed frustration that the current measures do not appear to be aligned with stock status. The Council and Policy Board agreed that further consideration should be given to the starting point for measures under all alternatives.
- **Management uncertainty** – The Council and Policy Board agreed that further consideration should be given to the implications of the alternatives for management uncertainty buffers as currently defined in the Fishery Management Plan.
- **Use of the Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) model** – The previously developed Summer Flounder MSE model will be used to analyze several aspects of this management action. For example, it may be used to evaluate the performance of potential indicator thresholds which define the boundaries between management measure bins, the management response to crossing those thresholds, and measures assigned to each management response. Given time constraints, simplifying assumptions will need to be made and realistic example measures are not expected to be generated for every bin under all alternatives.
- **Impacts on the commercial sector** – Although this action will only consider the process for setting recreational measures, the Council and Policy Board agreed to further evaluate potential indirect impacts to the commercial sector. This action will not consider any changes to commercial management and it will not consider transferring quota between the commercial and recreational sectors.
- **Other topics** – This action may consider other topics, as appropriate. For example, this could include potential revisions to the accountability measures and considerations related to conservation equivalency.

**Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) / Plan Development Team (PDT)**

An FMAT/PDT has been formed to assist with development and analysis of potential alternatives. FMAT/PDT members are listed in the table below. Other Council, Commission, and NOAA Fisheries staff, as well as other experts, will be consulted as needed.

<b>FMAT/PDT Member Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Role/Expertise</b>
Tracey Bauer	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Julia Beaty	Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Chelsea Tuohy	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Mike Celestino	New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection	Technical analysis and state management
Alexa Galvan	Virginia Marine Resources Commission	Technical analysis and state management
Emily Keiley	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Fisheries policy and legal requirements
Marianne Randall	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	National Environmental Policy Act requirements
Scott Steinback	Northeast Fisheries Science Center	Recreational fisheries economist
Rachel Sysak	New York Department of Environmental Conservation	Technical analysis and state management
Corinne Truesdale	Rhode Island Department of Fish and Wildlife	Technical analysis and state management
Sam Truesdell	Northeast Fisheries Science Center	Stock assessments
Sara Turner	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Scientific and technical analysis of federal fisheries management

**Commissioner/Council Member Work Group**

The Council and Policy Board established a small group of Commissioners and Council members to act as a liaison between the PDT/FMAT and the Policy Board. The purpose of the Work Group is to guide the FMAT/PDT on the intent of the Council and Policy Board, not to develop new options/alternatives. This group will periodically meet with the PDT/FMAT. Work Group members are listed below.

<b>Work Group Member Name</b>	<b>Council Member or Commissioner</b>
Skip Feller	Council member
Jason McNamee	Commissioner
Nichola Meserve	Commissioner
Adam Nowalsky	Both
Paul Risi	Council member

**Draft Timeline – Subject to change**

<b>May 2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FMAT/PDT formed.</li> </ul>
<b>June - July 2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FMAT/PDT meetings.</li> </ul>
<b>August 2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council and Policy Board meeting to review progress and discuss next steps.</li> <li>• Council member/Commissioner work group formed.</li> </ul>
<b>September - November 2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FMAT/PDT and Council member/Commissioner work group meeting.</li> <li>• AP meeting to review progress and provide input.</li> <li>• Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting to review progress.</li> </ul>
<b>December 2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council and Policy Board meeting to review progress and discuss next steps.</li> </ul>
<b>January - June 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FMAT/PDT and Council/Commissioner work group meetings to continue development and analysis of alternatives and develop draft document for public hearings.</li> <li>• Formation and meetings of an SSC sub-committee to assist with analysis.</li> </ul>
<b>June 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council and Policy Board meeting to review progress and discuss next steps.</li> </ul>
<b>July 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SSC meeting to review draft sub-group report and finalize report from full SSC.</li> <li>• AP meeting to review draft range of alternatives and provide input to Council and Policy Board.</li> </ul>
<b>August 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council and Policy Board meeting to approve final range of alternatives and approve draft document for public hearings through Commission process.</li> </ul>
<b>Fall 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public hearings through Commission process.</li> </ul>
<b>Late 2024 - Early 2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FMAT/PDT and AP meetings to provide input to Council and Policy Board prior to final action.</li> </ul>
<b>April 2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council and Policy Board meeting for final action.</li> </ul>
<b>April-December 2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development, review, and revisions of framework/addenda documents.</li> <li>• Federal rulemaking.</li> <li>• Monitoring and Technical Committee use new process to set 2026 recreational measures.</li> </ul>
<b>Late 2025 or early 2026</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective date of implemented changes.</li> </ul>

Agenda – Atlantic spiny dogfish ageing workshop

January 22-23rd, 2024

Sheraton Raleigh Hotel, 421 S Salisbury St, Raleigh, NC

Day 1/Jan. 22nd

- 08:30: Welcome and Introductions – Michelle Passerotti
- 08:45: Ageing Atlantic spiny dogfish at the NEFSC: Past, present, and future – Michelle Passerotti/Jonathan Auguste
- 09:30: Perspectives on *S. acanthias* ageing in the northeastern US – Marta Nammack/Wally Bubley
- 10:15: Break
- 10:30: VIMS ageing perspectives – Jameson Gregg
- 11:00: Discussion
- 11:30: Lunch (on your own, plenty of walkable locations near the hotel)
- 1:00: Perspectives from spiny dogfish ageing on two coasts– Cindy Tribuzio (remote)
- 1:45: Ageing protocol overview – Cindy Tribuzio + group
- 2:45: Break
- 3:00: Hands-on ageing using reference collection/age trial
- 5:00: End Day 1

Day 2/Jan. 23rd

- 08:00: Recap day 1 – Michelle Passerotti
- 08:15: Ageing spiny dogfish in Norway – Rosario Lavezza, Norway Institute of Marine Research
- 09:00: Bayesian techniques for spiny dogfish age and growth studies – Fabio Caltabellotta/Lisa Hillier
- 09:45: Break
- 10:00: Practical discussion
  - Developing best practices and SOPs
  - Cleaning
  - Counting
  - Workflows
  - Precision tools
  - Data analysis
- 11:45: Final thoughts/discussion
- 12:30: Meeting adjourned



# Forage Management in the Mid-Atlantic

<https://www.mafmc.org/forage>

Forage species are small, low trophic level fish and invertebrates that play an important role in marine food webs. These species facilitate the transfer of energy to higher trophic levels by consuming very small prey and then being eaten by larger fish, marine mammals, and seabirds. Many forage species are short-lived and undergo substantial cyclic fluctuations in stock size. Abundance of forage species is often sensitive to environmental variables. These factors pose challenges for traditional stock assessment and management approaches.



In 2016, as part of its [Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management \(EAFM\) Guidance Document](#), the Mid-Atlantic Council adopted a policy of supporting the “maintenance of an adequate forage base in the mid-Atlantic to ensure ecosystem productivity, structure and function, and to support sustainable fishing communities.” The EAFM Guidance Document also outlines the Council’s science and management goals and strategies of both managed and unmanaged forage species related to their roles in the ecosystem, the economy, and society more generally.

## Managed Forage Species

The Mid-Atlantic Council manages five forage species – Atlantic mackerel, chub mackerel, *Illex* squid, longfin squid, and butterfish – under a [single Fishery Management Plan](#) (FMP). The Council sets annual catch limits, accountability measures, and other management measures that are intended to prevent overfishing while allowing these fisheries to achieve optimum yield.

The Council is also involved in the conservation and management of river herring (alewives and blueback) and shad (American and hickory). The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has primary management responsibility for river herring and shad (RH/S), as there are no directed fisheries for these species in federal waters. However, the Council sets measures to limit the incidental catch of RH/S in the Atlantic mackerel fishery. The Council also collaborates with

NOAA Fisheries and the ASMFC on the Atlantic Coast River Herring Collaborative Forum to help address broader river herring conservation issues. Learn more [here](#).

## Protections for “Unmanaged” Forage Species

### Unmanaged Forage Amendment

In August 2016, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council took final action on the [Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment](#) (Forage Amendment). This amendment established a 1,700 pound possession limit for over 50 forage species which were previously unmanaged in Mid-Atlantic Federal waters. These species were designated as ecosystem component (EC) species in all the Council’s FMPs. The possession limit applies to combined landings of all EC species.

The goal of the Forage Amendment was to prohibit the development of new and expansion of existing directed commercial fisheries for unmanaged forage species until the Council has had an adequate opportunity to assess the scientific information relating to any new or expanded directed fisheries and consider potential impacts to existing fisheries, fishing communities, and the marine ecosystem. See the Forage ID guide linked below for a list of taxa designated as ecosystem components by the Council through the Forage Amendment. The federal regulations at [50 CFR 648.2](#) further enumerate this list to the species level.

- [Unmanaged Forage ID Guide](#)

### Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP) for Forage Amendment EC Species

The Forage Amendment requires use of an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) as a first step towards the Council considering allowing landings beyond the 1,700 pound possession limit. An EFP is a permit that exempts a vessel from certain specified federal fishing regulations. EFPs for Forage Amendment EC species are issued by the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO).

In December 2023, the Council approved a guidance document for review of EFP applications for Forage Amendment EC species. The document is intended to establish a standard process for Council review of relevant EFP applications. This document outlines the information needed by the Council to inform its review of EFP applications for Forage Amendment EC species. The document does not modify or replace the process described in the federal regulations for obtaining EFPs from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regional offices.

- [Guidance Document for Council Review of Exempted Fishing Permit Applications for Unmanaged Forage Amendment Ecosystem Component Species](#) (December 2023)

### Unmanaged Landings Reports

As a follow on to the Forage Amendment, the Council requested that NOAA Fisheries provide annual updates on commercial landings of Forage Amendment EC species as well as other “unmanaged” species (i.e., species not managed by the Mid-Atlantic, New England, or South Atlantic Councils, NOAA Fisheries, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, or states).

These [Unmanaged Landings Reports](#) allow the Council to monitor for signs of developing unmanaged commercial fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic. New or growing fisheries could develop in response to changing species distributions, changing markets, changes in other fisheries, or for other reasons. The information contained in these annual reports can serve as a high level summary to help determine if further evaluation is needed and if consideration of a management response may be warranted.

## Additional Resources

- [White Paper: Managing Forage Fishes in the Mid-Atlantic Region](#)
- [EAFM Guidance Document](#), revised 2/8/19

## Staff Contacts

- **Forage Amendment, EFP review process, unmanaged landings reports, and chub mackerel:** Julia Beaty, Fishery Management Specialist - 302-526-5250, [jbeaty@mafmc.org](mailto:jbeaty@mafmc.org)
- **Atlantic mackerel, longfin squid, Illex squid, butterfish, river herring, and shad:** Jason Didden, Fishery Management Specialist – 302-526-5254, [jdidden@mafmc.org](mailto:jdidden@mafmc.org)



## **Improving Catch and Effort Data Collection from Recreational Tilefish Anglers**

### **Project Narrative**

This proposal aims to involve private anglers in the recreational fishing community who hold tilefish permits and are required to report their tilefish catch using a mobile application. The goal is to engage them through different outreach initiatives, which will be described in detail later in the proposal, to raise awareness about the tilefish reporting regulations and promote the use of the app.

The specific objectives would include:

- Improve compliance with recreational tilefish mandatory reporting.
- Conduct outreach activities to the recreational fishing community.
- Improve the collected analytic metadata within eFin such as number and locations of trips, ports landed, number of catches submitted, usage of specific app features, errors encountered during upload, etc.

### **Background/Need**

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) is responsible for developing and implementing fishery management plans (FMPs) that promote the conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources in the Mid-Atlantic region. The Council's management decisions are based on the best available scientific information and are designed to prevent overfishing while achieving optimum yield from each fishery. Tilefish is managed by the MAFMC from Maine through the Virginia/North Carolina border. For most fisheries, recreational catch and effort are estimated by National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) using a suite of surveys to collect data from anglers. However, because tilefish are caught far offshore and relatively few anglers participate in the fishery, MRIP estimates may not accurately capture recreational catch and effort. To address these concerns, in August 2020, mandatory permitting and reporting requirements for private recreational vessels fishing for blueline or golden tilefish were implemented. Although for-hire and commercial fishermen have been reporting their harvest for many years, mandating private recreational anglers to report tilefish trips electronically was a first for the east coast. Under these regulations, private recreational vessels must obtain a federal private recreational tilefish vessel permit to target 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 requirements are intended to improve our understanding of recreational tilefish catch and effort.

However, since the mandatory permitting and reporting requirements were implemented, angler reporting rate has been very low. Collectively from 2020 through October 2023 about 3,074 permits have been issued to 1,564 unique vessels, but only 146 trips have been reported (about

1,995 tilefish - 1,132 blue line and 783 golden tilefish and 107 tilefish species unknown). This mismatch between the number of permits issued and the number of reported trips highlights the need for outreach to improve the overall awareness of and compliance with the tilefish permitting and reporting requirements. At this time, it is unclear if anglers are simply unaware of the requirements or if there are other hurdles associated with the lack of reporting. Additional outreach will provide insight into this issue and enable us to identify potential solutions. Successful reporting is critical to improving our understanding of recreational golden and blue line tilefish catch and effort and will ensure that the fisheries are being monitored and managed appropriately. Additionally, given the increasing interest in private recreational reporting requirements for other fisheries, successful tilefish reporting could provide a gold standard for future discussions or actions on this topic.

## **Results and Benefits**

This proposal is intended to increase reporting of tilefish by recreational anglers. It is critical that management decisions for the tilefish fishery are based on the best available scientific information and are designed to prevent overfishing while achieving optimum yield from each fishery. The MAFMC's implementation of mandatory reporting for tilefish represents a significant stride towards sustainable fisheries management. This initiative not only serves to enhance the monitoring and conservation of tilefish populations but also offers valuable insights and lessons for other agencies considering mandatory recreational reporting for different species.

We expect the following tasks and approaches to produce results that reflect increased reporting of private recreational caught tilefish and will improve private recreational data on tilefish catch and effort.

### **Tasks/Approach:**

- I. Create outreach materials including but not limited to, presentations, brochures, and flyers describing the tilefish reporting requirement for audiences at fishing shows, fishing clubs, tackle shops, current permit holders, and other interested groups/individuals.
- II. Prepare outreach article describing the purpose of and need for the tilefish reporting requirement, how to acquire the permit, and options for self-reporting, for publication in *On The Water Magazine* and sharing on *On The Water's* social media pages. Sharing information about the permit on *On The Water's* podcast is also a possibility.
- III. Attend a minimum of four major fishing shows/seminar series in the southern New England and Mid-Atlantic regions and host a booth and/or give brief presentations to describe the tilefish self-reporting requirement. If feasible, provide attendees with an opportunity to acquire the permit on-site. Decisions on which shows to attend will be made based on input from MAFMC staff, state managers, and local stakeholders. Attend each show for a minimum of two days each. Hours are inclusive of travel time.

*Examples of events that could be of particular interest to tilefish anglers include:*

- Castafari Offshore Fishing Seminar, Quincy, MA (March 2-3, 2024)
- New England Saltwater Fishing Show, Providence, RI (March 8-10, 2024)
- Canyon Runner Seminar Series, Atlantic City, NJ (February 2-3, 2024)

- Saltwater Fishing Expo, Edison, NJ (March 15-17, 2024)
- Ocean City Boat Show, Ocean City, MD (February 16-18, 2024)
- Mid-Atlantic Sports and Boat Show, Virginia Beach, VA (TBD)

IV. Attend and present at a minimum of four local saltwater/offshore fishing club meetings to describe the tilefish self-reporting requirement and, if feasible, provide attendees with an opportunity to acquire the permit-on-site. Decisions on which shows to attend will be made based on input from MAFMC staff, state managers, and local stakeholder. Hours are inclusive of travel time.

*Examples of clubs that may include a significant number of tilefish anglers include:*

- South Shore Marlin and Tuna Club (NY)
- Staten Island Tuna Club (NY)
- Manasquan River Marlin and Tuna Club (NJ)
- Forked River Tuna Club (NJ)
- Ocean City Marlin Club (MD)
- Peninsula Salt Water Sport Fisherman’s Association (VA)
- Virginia Beach Bluewater Fishing Club (VA)

V. Metadata: Enhance eFin application analytics infrastructure to better understand the effectiveness of outreach efforts to increase the usage of the application and the analysis of any correlations between outreach efforts and increased reporting results. By improving the infrastructure for the collection of analytics, data will be retained on a persistent basis without manually tabulating data periodically, making analysis more convenient and more valuable.

VI. Pursue opportunities to collaborate with/leverage resources of the NOAA Fisheries Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division given the existing overlap of user groups.

*Specific approaches could include:*

- Use HMS Angling permit-holder contact information for the purposes of direct outreach regarding the need to acquire the tilefish permit and report catch/effort (MAFMC staff have communicated that 2022 HMS Angling permit-holder information has already been shared with the MAFMC by HMS Management Division staff.).
- Coordinate tilefish outreach with HMS Recreational Coordinator to identify synergies and opportunities for shared engagement with offshore anglers.
- Explore possibility of presenting on the tilefish requirement at the spring meeting of the Atlantic HMS Advisory Panel Meeting (W. Goldsmith is an AP member and the HMS Management Division is currently [exploring options](#) to increase reporting compliance for its own recreational self-reporting requirement).

**Geographic location:**

All states north of the North Carolina/Virginia border, with a targeted focus on Mid-Atlantic / New England states with known private recreational tilefish effort. Target states include Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts.



## Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program

1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200A-N | Arlington, VA 22201

703.842.0780 | 703.842.0779 (fax) | [www.accsp.org](http://www.accsp.org)

24 January 2024

Hannah Hart  
Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council  
800 N. State Street  
Suite 201  
DE, Dover 19901

Dear Hannah,

At its October 17, 2023 meeting, the ACCSP Coordinating Council approved the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council's proposal entitled "*Improving Catch and Effort Data Collection from Recreational Tilefish Anglers*" for the amount of \$65134.

The NOAA Grants Office has been notified of this award. The office will provide you with its "Guidelines for Submitting to the Grants Office" document for further guidance on the submission process. I recommend agency personnel begin to prepare the documents required by the Grants Office soon in order to facilitate timely approval of this proposal.

Please send electronic copies of your grant application and project reports, as well as any other relevant project documents, to the ACCSP Deputy Director, Julie DeFilippi Simpson ([julie.simpson@accsp.org](mailto:julie.simpson@accsp.org)). This will allow us to track project progress and maintain a steady flow of information between the program and our partners. In this way, we can share lessons learned which may benefit our other state and federal partners in improving and implementing their own programs.

Congratulations on your award.

Sincerely,

Geoff White  
ACCSP Director

cc: Julie DeFilippi Simpson



## Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program

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*Our vision is to be the principal source of fisheries-dependent information on the Atlantic coast through the cooperation of all program partners.*

# ATTENTION TILEFISH ANGLERS!

## Blueline and Golden Tilefish Permitting and Reporting Requirements

### Our Tilefish Fishery

- Both blueline (or gray) and golden tilefish are popular targets for offshore anglers in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic.
- Recreational fishermen are thought to account for a sizable amount of harvest for both species.



Blueline (or gray) tilefish (left) and golden tilefish (right)

### Management Challenges

- Due to their deep-water habitat and unique life-history, both tilefish species are considered “data-poor,” making effective management challenging.
- It is particularly difficult to estimate how many tilefish are harvested by private anglers.
- Fishery scientists and managers urgently need to understand how many anglers target tilefish, how much time they spend fishing, and how many fish they catch to better assess these species’ overall health and ensure a strong fishery into the future.



**If you own or operate a private recreational vessel and target tilefish from Virginia northward, you are required to possess a free recreational tilefish permit and submit a trip report within 24 hours of returning to port from a tilefish trip. Here’s how to stay legal.**



### Step 1: Get a Permit

- The **free** annual permit helps managers understand the potential “universe” of tilefish anglers. It is required for both private vessels and for-hire vessels fishing privately.
- This is a vessel permit; you do not need to obtain it if fishing on someone else’s vessel.
- To obtain the permit, visit the NOAA Fisheries’ **Fish Online** website, create an account, and apply for a Private Recreational Tilefish Permit.
- Fishing for/keeping tilefish without a permit can result in a civil violation of \$500.

[NOAA Fish Online:](#)



**Plan Ahead:** The permit can take up to 30 days to be issued, so be sure to apply well before your first trip targeting tilefish this season.

### Step 2: Submit Trip Reports

- Vessel owners/operators must submit electronic trip reports for all trips on which tilefish are targeted, **even if you didn’t catch or keep any fish.**
- A mobile app called **eFin Logbook** has been developed for tilefish reporting.
  - Download the app to your smartphone or tablet and log in using your Fish Online credentials.
  - After each trip, submit key information such as: number of anglers, time spent fishing, and number of tilefish kept/discarded.
- Learn more at [bit.ly/efinlogbook](http://bit.ly/efinlogbook)

[eFin for iPhone:](#)



[eFin for Android:](#)



**Remember:** Trip reports must be submitted within 24 hours of returning to port from any trip on which you fished for tilefish, even if you targeted other species.

### The Data That YOU Report Will Help Ensure Healthy Fisheries for Years to Come

Accurate reporting of catch and fishing effort will help improve our understanding of the blueline and golden tilefish fisheries and ensure that these fisheries are being monitored and managed appropriately. **Your efforts now are an investment in long-term fishery health.**

**Learn More:** Visit [bit.ly/mafmc](http://bit.ly/mafmc) for additional information, resources, and contacts.







## **Program Evaluation: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Private Angler Tilefish Reporting**

### **Project Narrative**

This proposal aims to conduct a series of in-person meetings with recreational tilefish community leaders to evaluate the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (MAFMC) private angler tilefish permitting and reporting requirement and identify potential strategies for future success. While the requirement has been in place since August 2020, the program continues to encounter challenges with recruiting anglers to acquire the permit and then to report golden and blueline tilefish catch/effort, inhibiting the ability of the MAFMC and NOAA Fisheries to use the data for science and management purposes.

Through the approaches described below, Pelagic Strategies, in partnership with Stevenson Sustainability Consulting, will convene in-person, regionally focused "grasstops" meetings and solicit candid views directly from fishery participants regarding potential barriers to compliance and opportunities for increased participation. This effort will complement and enhance the MAFMC's upcoming outreach campaign to raise awareness of the tilefish permitting/reporting requirement at stakeholder events (fishing shows/club events) this coming winter. In addition, it could serve as a valuable precursor to development of a more robust program evaluation/strategic plan.

### **Background/Need**

The Council is responsible for developing and implementing fishery management plans (FMPs) that promote the conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources in the Mid-Atlantic region. The Council's management decisions are based on the best available scientific information and are designed to prevent overfishing while achieving optimum yield from each fishery. Tilefish is managed by the MAFMC from Maine through the Virginia/North Carolina border. For most fisheries, recreational catch and effort are estimated by NOAA's Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) using a suite of surveys to collect data from anglers. However, because tilefish are caught far offshore and relatively few anglers participate in the fishery, MRIP estimates may not accurately capture recreational catch and effort. To address these concerns, in August 2020, mandatory permitting and reporting requirements for private recreational vessels fishing for blueline or golden tilefish were implemented. Although for-hire and commercial fishermen have been reporting their harvest for many years, mandating private recreational anglers to report tilefish trips electronically was a first for the east coast. Under these regulations, private recreational vessels must obtain a federal private recreational tilefish vessel permit to target 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 requirements are intended to improve our understanding of recreational tilefish catch and effort.

However, since the mandatory permitting and reporting requirements were implemented, the angler reporting rate has been very low. Collectively from August 2020 through October 2023 about 3,074 permits have been issued to 1,564 unique vessels, but only 146 trips have been

reported (about 1,995 tilefish - 1,132 blue line and 783 golden tilefish and 107 tilefish species unknown). This mismatch between the number of permits issued and the number of reported trips highlights the need to evaluate the current requirements and investigate potential barriers to compliance.

### **Results and Benefits**

This proposal is intended to evaluate the current private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting requirements and identify potential strategies for future success. This effort will complement and enhance the MAFMC's upcoming outreach campaign to raise awareness of the tilefish permitting/reporting requirement at stakeholder events (fishing shows/club events) this coming winter. In addition, it could serve as a valuable precursor to the development of a more robust program evaluation/strategic plan.

### **Tasks/Approach:**

- I. Initial scoping to identify key "grasstops" leaders within the private angler tilefish community in each of five regions along the east coast: 1) Long Island, New York; 2) Northern New Jersey; 3) Southern New Jersey; 4) Coastal Maryland; and 5) Coastal Virginia. Examples of community leaders include: Tackle shop owners; offshore fishing club presidents/board members; outdoor writers/social media "influencers"; and particularly avid/well-known tilefish anglers. We will aim to identify three to six leaders within each region.
- II. Prepare a list of questions/discussion points to structure the meetings. Specific topics to discuss may include:
  - Perception of angler awareness/compliance in their region
  - Perception of why the program exists and how the data could be used
  - Angler attitudes about the program and barriers to compliance
  - Tangible steps that the MAFMC or NOAA Fisheries could take to increase participation
  - Broader views on recreational fishery catch and effort estimation and the role of angler electronic self-reporting
  - Scope angler attitudes to alternative regulatory mechanisms. Develop alternative approaches to potentially consider for improving estimates of private recreational tilefish catch and fishing effort.
- III. Organize and facilitate five in-person, informal tilefish "grasstops" leader meetings/workshops in each of the regions. We anticipate that each workshop will take approximately three hours. Workshops will begin with a brief overview presentation of the tilefish reporting requirement and progress to date before moving into the questions developed in Task II. Workshops will be hosted at venues convenient to participants (and cost-effective where possible; e.g., in university/non-profit office space), and participants will be reimbursed at the rate of \$200 for their time/travel. Meetings will occur over the course of two trips: One trip for the Long Island and two New Jersey meetings; and one trip for the Maryland and Virginia meetings.
- IV. Synthesize key meeting themes and provide strategic recommendations for potential next steps in the form of an oral presentation to the MAFMC's Tilefish Committee/Advisory Panel and full MAFMC and a written report (both the report and presentation deliverables will be complete by August 31, 2024).



# NOAA FISHERIES

## NOAA Fisheries and BOEM Release Joint North Atlantic Right Whale and Offshore Wind Strategy

NOAA National Marine Fisheries sent this bulletin at 01/25/2024 01:56 PM EST

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January 25, 2024

## NOAA Fisheries and BOEM Release Joint North Atlantic Right Whale and Offshore Wind Strategy

Today, NOAA Fisheries and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management announced the release of their [final joint strategy](#) to protect and promote the recovery of endangered North Atlantic right whales while responsibly developing offshore wind energy.

The joint strategy identifies the agencies' goals and key actions to continue to evaluate and mitigate the potential effects of offshore wind energy development on North Atlantic right whales and their habitat. It also builds on existing mitigation measures that are already in place to protect North Atlantic right whales from the potential impacts of offshore wind development.

Under this strategy, NOAA Fisheries and BOEM will take several actions to avoid, minimize, and monitor impacts to North Atlantic right whales from offshore wind development. For example, the agencies will advance current and novel

technologies—such as uncrewed systems, artificial intelligence, and passive acoustic monitoring—to achieve the strategy’s mitigation, research, and monitoring goals.

Other specific actions called for in the strategy include:

- Avoiding leasing in areas where major impacts to right whales may occur.
- Establishing noise limits during construction.
- Supporting research to develop new avoidance and minimization technologies; and
- Prioritizing research, development, and implementation of mitigation related to quieting technology and methods for offshore wind development.

This strategy exemplifies how the Administration’s all-of-government approach can leverage the resources and expertise of federal agencies like BOEM and NOAA Fisheries to protect ocean biodiversity and co-use while helping ensure the responsible development of offshore wind energy to address the climate crisis.

It is also a key component of NOAA Fisheries’ North Atlantic Right Whale [Road to Recovery](#), a plan that encapsulates our ongoing work across the agency and in collaboration with partners to address threats to the species and monitor recovery progress. The [North Atlantic right whale](#) is one of the world’s most endangered large whale species. The latest estimate suggests there are approximately 360 remaining, with fewer than 70 reproductively active females. Climate change is affecting every aspect of right whales’ survival—changing their ocean habitat, their migratory patterns, the location and availability of their prey, and even their risk of becoming entangled in fishing gear or being struck by vessels.

For more information on the strategy, go to our [website](#).