



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

MEMORANDUM

Date: November 28, 2017
To: Chris Moore, Executive Director
From: Matthew Seeley, Staff
Subject: Pilot Tilefish Survey Update

The Council funded fisheries-independent pilot survey out of SUNY Stony Brook for golden and blueline tilefish from Georges Bank to Cape Hatteras has completed. A final report will be available here: <http://www.mafmc.org/> at the time of the December 2017 Council meeting. At the meeting, two of the project principal investigators (PIs) will present on the survey design, methods, results, and future directions.

Limited funds remain from the survey as some survey costs were offset from the fish sold. With these funds, the PIs have suggested running a combination of tissue stable isotope, genetic, and otolith analyses to enhance the understanding of spatial patterns of blueline and golden tilefish. Staff supports these analyses since data on the spatial distribution of tilefish is lacking and the PIs have all necessary samples. This additional analysis may enhance our understanding of blueline and golden tilefish spatial patterns and assist in designing future surveys.

The Council's goals in funding this survey were to:

1. Describe the spatial distribution of tilefish within the Mid-Atlantic management area.
2. Work towards the development of a fisheries-independent index for tilefish.
3. Develop methods and protocols for a future long-term fisheries independent survey.

With the completion of the survey, Council staff recommend that the Council move forward with a formal review of the pilot study and the future direction of a fishery-independent tilefish survey. A review team will consist of MAFMC and SAFMC staff/SSC members and individuals from the NEFSC and SEFSC (due to multijurisdictional issues) and will meet most likely via webinar in late winter of 2018.

Council staff will work with science center staff to develop terms of reference (TOR) that will guide the review team and provide direction on next steps. Mainly, can this survey be applied coastwide, and if so, what are the funding source options and potential costs for indexing one or

both stocks? Also, how can future survey designs be refined using the results of the pilot study? The review team will address these TORs and provide insight on the most economical next steps.