



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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MEMORANDUM

Date: April 25, 2023
To: Chris Moore
From: José Montañez
Subject: Golden Tilefish 2024 Specifications Review

In 2021, the Council set specifications for 2022, 2023, and 2024 fishing years. As part of the 2022-2024 multiyear specification process for golden tilefish, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), the Tilefish Monitoring Committee (MC), and the Council will review the most recent information to determine whether modifications to the current 2024 specifications set by the Council are warranted.

In 2021 and 2022, 1.5 million pounds (93 percent of the quota) and 1.7 million pounds (91 percent of the quota) of golden tilefish were landed, respectively (Table 1).

The biological reference points for golden tilefish were updated in the 2021 management track assessment (Nitschke 2021). The fishing mortality threshold for golden tilefish is $F_{40\%}$ (as F_{MSY} proxy) = 0.261, and $SSB_{40\%}$ (SSB_{MSY} proxy) is 24.23 million pounds (10,995 mt). The latest assessment indicates that the golden tilefish stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2020 (Nitschke 2021). Fishing mortality in 2020 was estimated at $F=0.160$; 39 percent below the fishing mortality threshold of $F=0.261$ (F_{MSY} proxy). SSB in 2020 was estimated at 23.28 million pounds (10,562 mt), and was at 96 percent of the biomass target (SSB_{MSY} proxy).

The NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center provided a data update (through 2022) for golden tilefish to support this review. Landings per unit of effort in 2022 decreased relative to the recent peak in 2020 as the strong 2013 year class appears to be aging out of the commercial fishery (Nitschke 2023). Tracking of the strong 2013 year class is also reflected in the landings market category proportions and the landings at length distributions. There is some evidence of a stronger than average year class in 2017 which can be seen tracking through the updated 2021 and 2022 landings market category proportions and the landings at length distributions. However, the decrease in the 2022 CPUE (catch per unit effort) suggests that the 2017 year class may not be as strong as the 2013 year class (Nitschke 2023).

A Tilefish Advisor indicated that effort has been consistent as far as days at sea, and more fish are being landed with the same effort. This advisor also indicated a good mix of fish sizes in 2022. A larger amount of extra small fish (< 2 pounds) were present in 2022 compared to previous years.

Based on a review of this information, staff recommend no change to the 2024 fishing year specifications. A golden tilefish research track stock assessment is scheduled for spring of 2024 and this assessment will be used by the Council to set management measures for the next specifications cycle.

Table 1. Summary of management measures and landings for fishing year 2007-2024.^a

Management Measures	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
ABC (m lb)	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.013	2.013	1.766	1.898	1.898	1.636	1.636	1.636	1.636	1.964	1.964	1.964
TAL (m lb)	1.995	1.995	1.995	1.995	1.995	1.995	1.995	1.995	1.755	1.887	1.887	1.626	1.626	1.626	1.625	1.839	1.839	1.839
Com. quota- (m lb)	1.995	1.995	1.995	1.995	1.995	1.995	1.995	1.995	1.755	1.887	1.887	1.626	1.626	1.626	1.625/ 1.672*	1.839	1.839	1.839
Com. landings	1.794	1.689	1.906	2.021	1.924	1.873	1.840	1.826	1.351	1.051	1.501	1.624	1.563	1.403	1.548	1.668	-	-
Com. Overage / underage (m lb)	-0201	-0.306	-0.089	+0.026	-0.071	-0.122	-0.155	-0.169	-0.404	-0.836	-0.387	-0.003	-0.064	-0.223	-0.123	-0.171	-	-
Incidental trip limit (lb)	300	300	300	300	300	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500
Rec. possession limit	-	-	-	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b	8 ^b

^a From 2001 to 2021, fishing year = November 1 – October 31 period. For example, 2007 fishing year = November 1, 2006 – October 31, 2007. For 2022, fishing year = November 1, 2021 – December 31, 2022. For 2023 on, fishing year = January 1 – December 31. ^b Eight fish per person per trip. *The Council requested for emergency action to allow unharvested 2020 IFQ pounds to be carried over into the 2021 fishing year, up to 5 percent of the quota shareholders initial 2020 allocation. Commercial landings from NMFS unpublished dealer data.

References

Nitschke, P. 2021. Golden Tilefish, *Lopholatilus chamaeleonticeps*, Management Track Assessment through 2020 in the Middle Atlantic-Southern New England Region. NMFS/NEFSC, Woods Hole, MA. <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2021/ssc-july-21-23>

Nitschke, P. 2023. Golden Tilefish, *Lopholatilus chamaeleonticeps*, data update through 2022 in the Middle Atlantic-Southern New England Region. NMFS/NEFSC, Woods Hole, MA. <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2023/tilefish-ap-meeting-april-20>