Joint Mid-Atlantic & South Atlantic Blueline Tilefish SSC Sub-Group

Review Workshop Summary

South Atlantic SSC Meeting
May 28, 2025

Joint SSC Sub-Group – Background

- Sub-Group members

John Boreman	Jim Gartland	Yan Jiao
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  - Support from SEFSC, NEFSC, MAFMC, SAFMC
- Group served as peer review of stock north of Hatteras and DLMTool developed through SEDAR process
  - Charged with reviewing DLMTool, data inputs, provide catch limit recommendations, and develop approach to spilt catch limit between jurisdictions – develop a report addressing 9 ToRs
  - Review workshop held via webinar on April 21 and April 23

Joint SSC Sub-Group – Key Findings

- Term of Reference #1 – Data
  - Suite of data concerns identified following SEDAR 50
    - Some concerns addressed in SEDAR 92 – growth parameters, recreational catch
    - Many remain unaddressed or not fully resolved (e.g., ageing)
  - Primary data sources are commercial and recreational catch estimates and length frequency
    - MRIP estimates for private recreational fleet – highly variable and uncertain
    - Commercial longline lengths obtained from fewer than 10 observed trips since 2014
    - Fishery-independent SADL survey should be available in future
  - Data decisions by Topical Working Group and assessment lead were appropriate and justified

Joint SSC Sub-Group – Key Findings

- Term of Reference #2 – Methods
  - Given limited data available, the DLM application and procedures considered were appropriate
  - Two mean length MPs did not produce viable results (negative Fs) and were not used
    - These were the two MPs used following SEDAR 50 to set catch limits
  - Three catch-based MPs produced more realistic TAC estimates
    - These MPs were not preferred following SEDAR 50
  - Given MPs and data available for use, the catch-based MPs were considered suitable to provide management advice

Joint SSC Sub-Group – Key Findings

- Term of Reference #3 – Stock Status
  - DLM analyses do not provide description of population and fishery dynamics
    - No estimates of population size or fishing mortality available
  - Model outputs generally align with input data and biological characteristics of this data-limited species
  - Fishery indicators/trends were discussed:
    - Increasing trend in catch time series
    - Higher percentage of larger fish in commercial longline fishery in recent years
    - Catch limits in both regions and both sectors are being reached
    - Industry observations indicating large presence of fish and various sizes and ages
    - Increasing number of record-size awards/citations in recreational sector in NC, VA, and MD

Joint SSC Sub-Group – Key Findings

- Term of Reference #4 – Projections
  - DLM cannot provide population projections
- Term of Reference #5 – Uncertainties
  - Uncertainties were effectively addressed to the extent practicable
  - Bootstrapping procedures provide estimates of uncertainty for the TAC outputs associated with the three catch-based MPs
    - Uncertainties provided by bootstrapping are likely underestimated
    - Uncertainty in catch estimates are quite large and not propagated through the analysis

Joint SSC Sub-Group – Key Findings

- Term of Reference #6 – Catch Recommendations
  - Outputs from the two mean length MPs used after SEDAR 50 were MSY proxies and considered an OFL – not viable following SEDAR 92
  - The three catch-based MPs available were considered as ABC proxies
    - Did not apply Council risk policy or control rule
  - The CC1 MP – average catch over last 5 years – was recommended for use by sub-group
    - Most representative of current fishery and captures recent variability and uncertainty in catch estimates
    - Using 50% quantile from CC1 outputs results in an **ABC of 646,000 pounds (293 mt)**
  - Given high uncertainty, suggest the councils consider including a management uncertainty buffer when setting ACL/ACT

Joint SSC Sub-Group – Key Findings

- Term of Reference #7 – Jurisdiction Apportion
  - Considered 2 options – 1) landings information or 2) fishery-independent survey data
  - Recommended using information from the 2023 and 2024 SADL survey
  - Considered several potential methods to apply to SADL data to apportion ABC
  - Recommended a combined 2023/24 catch-per-haul weighted by strata area
    - Similar approach as applied and reviewed using 2017 pilot information
    - Survey design and CPUE should account for spatial habitat variability
  - Results in apportioning 70% of ABC to MAFMC and 30% to SAFMC (approx. 14% change from calculations using 2017 pilot, 75 fish)

Questions?