

# Regulatory Amendment 28 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

Modification of Management for Golden Tilefish

Summary for Snapper Grouper AP

## Background

The status of the golden tilefish stock in the South Atlantic was updated in April 2016 with data through 2014 (SEDAR 25 Update 2016). The update indicated the golden tilefish stock is undergoing overfishing but is not overfished. On January 3, 2017, NMFS sent a letter informing the Council that the golden tilefish stock is undergoing overfishing, and that management action is necessary to end overfishing.

The South Atlantic Council requested that NMFS implement interim measures to reduce overfishing of golden tilefish while long-term management measures and regulations to end overfishing are developed through Regulatory Amendment 28. The South Atlantic Council requested interim measures in a letter to NMFS dated June 27, 2017. These interim measures were published and effective on January 2, 2018 (83 FR 65) for 180 days, with the option to request an extension for an additional 186 days. Regulatory Amendment 28 will look at management measures for golden tilefish beginning in 2019.

Following the December 2017 meeting, the Council requested additional analyses for golden tilefish from the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center based on the SSC's recommendation to use a P\* value of 30% to determine ACL. Furthermore, at their March 2018 meeting the Council requested that the SSC consider continuing setting the  $ACL = 75\%$  of FMSY as a way to reduce the size of the buffer between OFL and the ACL arising from the  $P^* = 30\%$  calculations.

## Actions in this amendment

- **Action 1:** Revise the annual catch limit for golden tilefish
- **Action 2:** Adjust the fishing year for commercial hook and line for golden tilefish

## Expected amendment timing

December 2017	Council directed staff to begin the development of a golden tilefish amendment
March 2018	Council reviewed the document and determined which actions to include
April/May 2018	Amendment is reviewed by the Snapper Grouper AP, the Law Enforcement AP, and the SSC
June 2018	Council receives public comments, makes final changes to actions/alternatives, and takes final action on Regulatory Amendment 28
June 2018	Amendment sent for Secretarial Review
January 2019	Actions are implemented.

# Purpose and need statement

## ***Purpose for Action***

Adjust catch levels and implement management measures of golden tilefish in the South Atlantic

## ***Need for Action***

End overfishing of golden tilefish, while minimizing to the extent practicable, adverse socio-economic effects and achieve optimum yield on a continuing basis as per the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

# Proposed Actions and Alternatives

## **Action 1: Revise the Annual Catch Limit for Golden Tilefish**

### **Discussion:**

- The Council set an overall annual catch limit (ACL) of 323,000 pounds whole weight (lbs ww) for 2018 in the interim rule (2017). The interim rule will expire at the end of 2018.
- Based on projections provided by the SEFSC with P\* of 30%, the Council will decide the level of management uncertainty in determining the ACL.
- The Council added an alternative to continue the  $ACL = 75\% \text{ of } F_{MSY}$ .
- **Tables 1 – 4** show the total ACL, the commercial longline ACL, the commercial hook and line ACL, and the recreational ACL.
- The total ACL is allocated to the commercial sector (97%) and to the recreational sector (3%). The commercial ACL is allocated to the golden tilefish longline sector (75%) and to the hook-and-line sector (25%) (Amendment 17B, SAFMC 2010; and Amendment 18B, SAFMC 2012a).
- **Table 5** shows projected closure dates in 2019 for the ACL alternatives considered.
- In order to have an ACL in place for the beginning of 2019, the Council will need to take final action at the June 2018 Council meeting.

**Table 1.** The total annual catch limit alternatives for golden tilefish for years 2019-2024. All values in pounds gutted weight (lbs gw).

	<b>Alternative 1 No Action (ACL as modified by the interim rule)</b>	<b>Alternative 2 (The projected yield at P* of 30%; ACL=ABC)</b>	<b>Alternative 3 (ACL=90% of ABC)</b>	<b>Alternative 4 (ACL=80% of ABC)</b>	<b>Alternative 5 (ACL = 75% F<sub>MSY</sub>)</b>
2019	Interim rule:	251,000	225,900	200,800	323,000
2020	323,000	285,000	256,500	228,000	323,000
2021	When interim	314,000	282,600	251,200	323,000
2022	rule expires:	338,000	304,200	270,400	323,000
2023	558,036	356,000	320,400	284,400	323,000
2024		368,000	331,200	294,400	323,000

**Table 2.** Total annual catch limit alternatives for golden tilefish **commercial longline sector** for years 2019-2024.

	<b>Alternative 1 No Action (ACL as modified by the interim rule)</b>	<b>Alternative 2 (The projected yield at P* of 30%; ACL=ABC)</b>	<b>Alternative 3 (ACL=90% of ABC)</b>	<b>Alternative 4 (ACL=80% of ABC)</b>	<b>Alternative 5 (ACL = 75% F<sub>MSY</sub>)</b>
2019	Interim rule:	182,602	164,342	146,082	235,982
2020	(235,982)	207,337	186,604	165,870	235,982
2021	When interim	228,435	205,591	182,748	235,982
2022	rule expires:	245,895	221,305	196,716	235,982
2023	405,971	258,990	233,091	207,192	235,982
2024		267,720	240,948	214,176	235,982

**Table 3.** Total annual catch limit alternatives for golden tilefish **commercial hook and line sector** for years 2019-2024<sup>1</sup>

	<b>Alternative 1 No Action (ACL as modified by the interim rule)</b>	<b>Alternative 2 (The projected yield at P* of 30%; ACL=ABC)</b>	<b>Alternative 3 (ACL=90% of ABC)</b>	<b>Alternative 4 (ACL=80% of ABC)</b>	<b>Alternative 5 (ACL = 75% F<sub>MSY</sub>)</b>
2019	Interim rule 78,328	60,868	54,781	48,694	78,328
2020		69,113	62,201	55,290	78,328
2021	When interim rule expires: 135,324	76,145	68,531	60,916	78,328
2022		81,965	73,769	65,572	78,328
2023		86,330	77,697	69,064	78,328
2024		89,240	80,316	71,392	78,328

**Table 4.** Total annual catch limit alternatives for golden tilefish **recreational sector** for years 2019-2024, in numbers of fish.<sup>2</sup>

	<b>Alternative 1 No Action (ACL as modified by the interim rule)</b>	<b>Alternative 2 (The projected yield at P* of 30%; ACL=ABC)</b>	<b>Alternative 3 (ACL=90% of ABC)</b>	<b>Alternative 4 (ACL=80% of ABC)</b>	<b>Alternative 5 (ACL = 75% F<sub>MSY</sub>)</b>
2019	Interim rule: 2,187	1,699	1,529	1,359	2,187
2020		1,930	1,737	1,544	2,187
2021	When interim rule expires: 3,019	2,126	1,913	1,701	2,187
2022		2,288	2,060	1,831	2,187
2023		2,410	2,169	1,928	2,187
2024		2,492	2,242	1,993	2,187

<sup>1</sup> Due to standard rounding, the commercial hook-and-line and longline ACLs for Alternatives 2-3 results in a change of 0.5 pounds for each component. Rounding up would cause the commercial ACL to be exceeded. Therefore, the hook-and-line ACL was rounded up to the nearest whole pound, and the longline component ACL was rounded down to the nearest whole pound.

<sup>2</sup> The recreational sector ACL is reported in numbers of fish. A conversion rate of 6.21 was used to convert lbs ww into numbers of fish (Regulatory Amendment 12, SAFMC 2012b).

**Table 5.** The **projected 2019 closure dates** of Golden Tilefish by sector for each alternative with the combined 2019 sector ACL in pounds (lbs) gutted weight (gw) for reference.

Sector	Alternative 1 (Total ACL Interim rule: 323,000 After interim rule: 558,036)	Alternative 2 (Total ACL 251,000)	Alternative 3 (Total ACL 225,900)	Alternative 4 (Total ACL 200,800)	Alternative 5 (Total ACL 323,000)
Commercial Hook-and-Line	September 28	March 26	March 18	March 10	April 26
Commercial Longline	February 27	January 25	January 23	January 20	February 1
Recreational	April 20	March 26	March 22	March 19	April 4

### Action Alternatives:

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** The total annual catch limit for golden tilefish is equal to the yield at 75% of  $F_{MSY}$  when the population is at equilibrium. The current total annual catch limit for golden tilefish is 323,000 pounds gutted weight, as established temporarily through an interim rule for golden tilefish implemented on January 2, 2017 (83 FR 65). The interim rule value is based on projected yield of 75% of  $F_{MSY}$ . This interim rule is valid through July 1, 2018 and may be extended for an additional 186 days. Once the interim rule expires, the ACL will revert back to the previous ACL of 558,036 pounds gutted weight.

**Alternative 2.** Revise the golden tilefish annual catch limits. The total annual catch limit would equal the acceptable biological catch. (The acceptable biological catch recommendation from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee is  $P^*=30\%$ .)

**Alternative 3.** Revise the golden tilefish annual catch limits. The total annual catch limit =90% of ABC. (The acceptable biological catch recommendation from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee is  $P^*=30\%$ .)

**Alternative 4.** Revise the golden tilefish annual catch limits. The total annual catch limit = 80% of ABC. (The acceptable biological catch recommendation from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee is  $P^*=30\%$ .)

**Alternative 5.** Allow the total annual catch limit for golden tilefish to remain equal to the yield at 75% of  $F_{MSY}$  when the population is at equilibrium. The total annual catch limit for golden tilefish would be 323,000 pounds gutted weight.

## **Action 2. Adjust the Fishing Year for the Commercial Hook and Line component**

### **Discussion:**

- This action was first discussed in Snapper Grouper Amendment 18B. The action was fully analyzed; however, the Council decided at that time to choose **Alternative 1 (No Action)** because the splitting of the commercial ACL into two components, longline and hook-and-line, was thought would alleviate the problem of the entire commercial ACL being taken by the longline portion of the fishery.
- The commercial hook and line fishery did not close in-season in 2016, but closed on November 29, 2017, when the ACL was predicted to be reached. The hook-and-line sector ACL for 2016 was 140,325 lbs gutted weight (gw). The hook-and-line sector ACL for 2017 was 132,215 lbs gw. The hook-and-line ACL for both years was 135,324 lbs gw.
- **Table 3** shows the lower ACLs being considered in **Action 1** for the hook-and-line sector for future years.
- The AP may want to discuss the potential future implications of misaligning the fishing year within the commercial sector on management and stock status determination.

### **Action Alternatives:**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain the existing calendar year as the golden tilefish fishing year (January 1 through December 31) for all sectors.

**Alternative 2.** Modify the fishing year for the hook and line component to September 1 through August 31.

**Alternative 3.** Modify the fishing year for the hook and line component to August 1 through July 31.

**Alternative 4.** Modify the fishing year for the hook and line component to May 1 through April 30.