

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 Document for Law Enforcement 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, Law Enforcement AP, and the SSC
June 2018	Council receives public comments, makes final changes to actions/alternatives, and takes final action
June 2018	Amendment sent for Secretarial Review
January 2019	Actions implemented

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 for 2018 in the interim rule (2017). The interim rule will expire at the end of 2018.
- 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 1** 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 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 CFR 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.
- The AP may want to discuss potential law enforcement implications of misaligning the fishing year within the commercial sector.

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.