

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL



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Ben Hartig, Chairman
Dr. Michelle Duval, Vice Chairman

Robert K. Mahood, Executive Director
Gregg T. Waugh, Deputy Executive Director

December 16, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bonnie Ponwith

FROM: Bob Mahood 

SUBJECT: Request for Blueline Tilefish Stock Projections

The recent SEDAR 32 blueline tilefish benchmark assessment indicates the current Annual Catch Limit (ACL) of blueline tilefish exceeds the Maximum Sustained Yield (MSY) and that stock biomass is likely to fall over the next several years as the Council develops regulations to end overfishing. To reduce the future reduction in stock biomass, the Council requested that NOAA Fisheries take emergency action to reduce the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) of blueline tilefish for 2014 to the yield at 75% F_{MSY} (224,100 pounds whole weight). The Council also requested the SEFSC consider recent information from the fishery to determine whether stronger than estimated recruitment may be supporting current catch levels. This memo details the Council's analytical requests necessary to establish a more permanent blueline tilefish ACL in Amendment 32.

1. The Council requests projections of blueline tilefish stock status and yield resulting from imposing a catch limit of 224,100 pounds whole weight in 2014, followed by fishing at the mortality rate that results in both a 30% and 50% chance of overfishing occurring in 2015 and beyond. Projected yield should be provided in pounds and numbers, for landings and discards. To allow consideration of these projections by the SSC in April and Council in June, results should be provided to Council staff by April 7, 2014.
2. The Council requests that an update assessment of blueline tilefish be prepared as soon as practicable. The Science Center is asked to consider potential timing of such an update, and its impacts on other scheduled projects, and report findings to the Council for consideration at the March SAFMC meeting, or at the next meeting of the SEDAR Steering Committee, whichever occurs first.
3. The Council requests an evaluation of the age composition of 2012 and 2013 catches and investigation of the possibility that a strong year class of blueline tilefish has recently entered the fishery. Findings should be reported to the SSC at its April 2014 meeting. Based on discussions at the December Council meeting, the Florida FWCC and North

Carolina DMF may be able to assist in reading age structures. The Council staff is also available to provide any administrative or coordination support necessary.

We appreciate your assistance in addressing these requests. Please contact John Carmichael if you have any questions regarding these items.

cc: Ben Hartig
Michelle Duval
Gregg Waugh
John Carmichael
Myra Brouwer
Theo Brainerd
Tom Jamir
Phil Steele
Jack McGovern
Luiz Barbieri