

# Amendment 32

## To the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region



# Options Paper

**Prepared by: Gregg Waugh (SAFMC Staff), Rick DeVactor (NMFS IPT Lead),  
and Myra Brouwer (SAFMC Staff)**

**FEBRUARY 19, 2014**

# Background

## What Actions Are Being Proposed?

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) is proposing changes to blueline tilefish management as a result of the 2013 stock assessment (SEDAR 32 2013) through Amendment 32. The stock assessment found the blueline tilefish stock to be overfished and undergoing overfishing. The Council evaluated the results of the assessment and the recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) at their December 2013 meeting and voted to request emergency action. The Council sent their request in a December 10, 2013, letter addressed to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Secretary of Commerce may promulgate emergency regulations if the Council requests the taking of such action by less than a unanimous vote. The Council voted 12 to 1 to request emergency action at their December 2013 meeting.

NMFS is preparing a temporary rule through emergency action under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) to revise the annual catch limits (ACL) and in-season accountability measures (AM), beginning in 2014, for the deep-water complex and blueline tilefish. The temporary rule, however, expires after 180 days and can be renewed for an additional 186 days. Hence, the South Atlantic Council is developing Amendment 32 to permanently implement the temporary changes along with long-term management measures.

## Council Guidance from December 2013 Meeting

Council staff briefly went over the scoping document and scoping comments on the amendment. Staff gave a presentation to clarify the stock assessment projections for blueline tilefish and present options for setting the ACL. The Committee discussed the following regarding blueline tilefish:

- Request that the SSC review the blueline tilefish projections as soon as possible.
- Request that the SSC consider the fact that the new MRIP methodology was implemented in 2013 and may have influenced the estimate of recreational landings.
- The fishing mortality that the assessment model estimated for recent years is not realistic and an update to the assessment should be done as soon as possible to determine whether a strong year class is moving through the fishery. The Science and Research Director would inform the Council whether an update is feasible in 2014 during the Council Session.
- If an update cannot be completed in 2014, an ageing study should be attempted to determine the age composition of the 2012 & 2013 catches.
- **Note:** Preliminary planning suggests an assessment update could be conducted in 2015 (fall) using landings through 2014 with results presented to the SSC in April 2016. The Council would take final action at the June 2016 meeting, and the new ACL/regulations would be in place beginning in January 2017.
- Request that the SEFSC provide updated projections with the 2014 catch level at the yield at 75%Fmsy.
- Removal of blueline tilefish from the Deepwater Complex and establishment of management measures have to be done through a plan amendment (Amendment 32).

The Council approved the following motions:

MOTION: DIRECT STAFF TO DEVELOP A REGULATORY AMENDMENT TO MODIFY THE DEFINITION OF MSST FOR BLUELINE TILEFISH AS WELL AS ANY OTHER APPROPRIATE SNAPPER GROUPEL SPECIES WITH SIMILAR LOW NATURAL MORTALITY AND BRING TO THE COUNCIL FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL IN MARCH 2014. Note: This is being addressed in Regulatory Amendment 21.

MOTION: ACCEPT THE ALTERNATIVES BELOW AS PROPOSED BY STAFF AND GIVE THEM LATITUDE TO ADD ALTERNATIVES AS NEEDED Note: This applies to Regulatory Amendment 21.

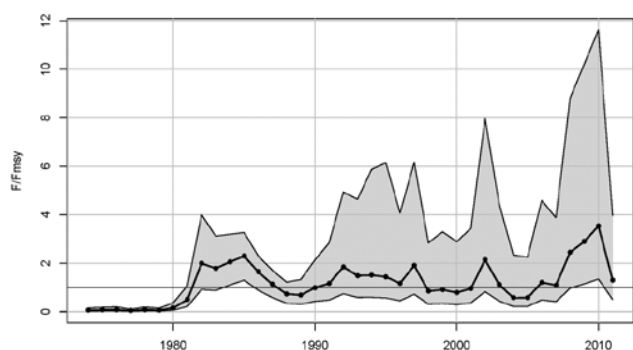
MOTION: ADD A MANAGEMENT MEASURE ALTERNATIVE TO AMENDMENT 32 THAT WOULD SET A COMMERCIAL TRIP LIMIT FOR BLUELINE TILEFISH OF 100 POUNDS FROM JANUARY TO APRIL AND 2000 POUNDS FROM MAY ONWARDS. WHEN 80% OF THE ACL IS CAUGHT, THE TRIP LIMIT WOULD BE REDUCED TO 100 POUNDS.  
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
APPROVED BY COUNCIL  
\*\*\*GUIDANCE TO DEVELOP A RANGE OF TRIP LIMIT ALTERNATIVES: 1,500 LBS, 2,500 LBS FOR MAY ONWARDS\*\*\*\*

MOTION: REQUEST AN EMERGENCY RULE TO IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING ACLs FOR BLUELINE TILEFISH AND THE REMAINDER OF THE DEEPWATER COMPLEX AS SHOWN BELOW:

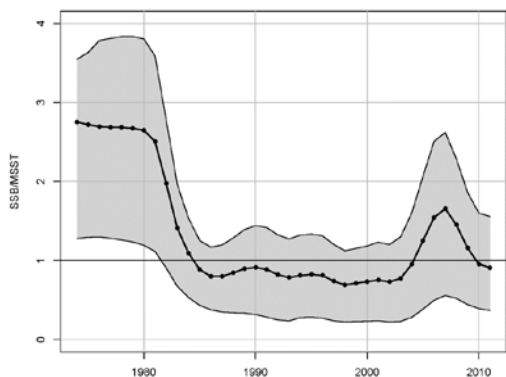
1. Blueline tilefish ACL = yield at 75%Fmsy = 224,100 pounds whole weight (Source: SEDAR Assessment)
2. Deepwater Complex ACL without Blueline Tilefish = 79,684 pounds whole weight.
3. It is the Council's intent that these values be implemented as soon as possible in 2014 in order to prevent catches from exceeding these levels.

## Stock Status of Blueline Tilefish

The health of the blueline tilefish stock in the South Atlantic was assessed in 2013 (SEDAR 32 2013). The results of the assessment indicated that blueline tilefish in the South Atlantic are experiencing overfishing (**Figure 1**) and are overfished according to the current definition for the minimum stock size threshold (**Figure 2**). The overfished ratio is  $SSB_{2011}/MSST=0.909$ . The overfishing ratio is  $F_{2009-2011}/F_{MSY}=2.37$ .



**Figure 1.** The overfishing ratio for blueline tilefish over time. The stock is undergoing overfishing when the  $F/F_{MSY}$  is greater than one (SEDAR 32 2013).



**Figure 2.** The overfished ratio for blueline tilefish over time. The stock is overfished when the  $SSB/MSST$  is less than one (SEDAR 32 2013).

The Council intends, through the request for emergency action, to reduce overfishing of blueline tilefish while permanent management measures and regulations are being developed in Amendment 32. The Council's goal through emergency action is to minimize adverse biological effects to the blueline tilefish stock and adverse socio-economic effects to fishermen and fishing communities that utilize the blueline tilefish portion of the snapper grouper fishery.

Although the actions in the emergency rule, if implemented, would likely have adverse, socio-economic effects beginning in 2014, the Council has determined that the short-term effects would be justified to minimize long-term reductions in harvest that may be required if the current levels of unsustainable harvest continue to reduce the biomass of the blueline tilefish stock. Landings in 2012 (477,126 pounds (lbs) whole weight (ww)) were significantly greater than the maximum sustainable yield at equilibrium (226,500 lbs ww). Continued exploitation at levels similar to the 2012 landings would negatively affect the health of the blueline tilefish stock.

NMFS is also considering modifications to the in-season AMs to ensure that harvest does not exceed the ACLs.

## History of Management for Blueline Tilefish

The Council and NMFS first implemented regulations affecting blueline tilefish in the South Atlantic Region in 1983; select regulations are shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Select regulations for blueline tilefish.

Date Implemented	Regulations Implemented
2/24/1999	Establishment of 5-fish aggregate grouper bag limit, which includes blueline tilefish
2/12/2009	Establishment of eight deep-water marine protected areas to protect a portion of the population and habitat of long-lived deep-water snapper grouper species
7/29/2009	Reduction of 5-fish aggregate grouper bag limit to a 3-fish aggregate.
1/31/2011	Prohibition on possession of deep-water snapper grouper species, including blueline tilefish, seaward of 240 feet in the South Atlantic EEZ.
4/16/2012	Creation of the deep-water complex. For deep-water complex, acceptable biological catch/annual catch limit = 675,908 pounds whole weight and established accountability measures
5/10/2012	Elimination of the harvest prohibition for six deep-water species, including blueline tilefish in depths greater than 240 feet

***SSC Recommendations for Blueline Tilefish***

**OFL**

Yield at P\*=0.50

**ABC**

Yield at P\*=0.30

**Maximum Overfishing Risk (P\*)**

30%

**Minimum Probability of Rebuilding Success**

70%

Note: The numerical values of OFL and ABC will be available after the April 2014 SSC meeting.

# Options for Actions and Alternatives

## Action 1. Re-define Maximum Sustainable Yield for Blueline Tilefish

Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) is the largest long-term average catch that can be taken continuously (sustained) from a stock or stock complex under average environmental conditions.

MSY for blueline tilefish was established through Amendment 11 to the Snapper Grouper FMP (SAFMC 1998). At that time, a stock assessment had not yet been conducted on the stock to obtain an MSY estimate. Therefore, the Council used a “proxy”, or substitute, value for MSY at 30% of the Spawning Potential Ratio (SPR). Now that a stock assessment has been conducted that provides an estimate of MSY, the Council needs to take action to adopt the new value and continue to adopt recommended MSY values as they are obtained from the Southeast Data, Review, and Assessment (SEDAR) process and the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC).

	Equation	F <sub>MSY</sub>	MSY Values (lbs whole weight)
<b>Alternative 1. No Action.</b>	Do not change the current definition of MSY for blueline tilefish. Currently, MSY equals the yield produced by F <sub>MSY</sub> . F <sub>30%SPR</sub> is used as the F <sub>MSY</sub> proxy.	F <sub>30%SPR</sub> =0.356	not specified
<b>Alternative 2.</b>	MSY equals the yield produced by F <sub>MSY</sub> or the F <sub>MSY</sub> proxy. MSY and F <sub>MSY</sub> are recommended by the most recent SEDAR/SSC.	0.302	226,500

**COMMITTEE ACTION:** The Committee/Council should choose a preferred alternative for Action 1.

**OPTION 1. SELECT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 1.**

**OPTION 2. OTHERS???**

## Acceptable Biological Catch for Blueline Tilefish

Through Amendment 32, the Council is adopting the ABC recommendation from the SSC. The SSC's ABC recommendation is the yield at  $P^*=0.30$ . The Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) provided projections at  $P^*=0.30$ , dated November 25, 2013, to the Council (See **Table 9** below from the projection paper). SEFSC is providing two additional projections, as requested by the Council, to the SSC for their April 2014 meeting:

- The first set of projections are to be run with the 2014 blueline tilefish catch level at the yield at  $75\%F_{MSY}$  (224,100 lbs ww), followed by fishing at the mortality rate that results in both a 30% and 50% chance of overfishing occurring in 2014 and beyond.
- The second set of projections are to be run with the 2014 blueline tilefish catch level at the yield at  $75\%F_{MSY}$  (224,100 lbs ww), followed by four additional years at the same catch level.

Table 9. Acceptable biological catch (ABC) in units of 1000 lb whole weight based on the annual probability of overfishing  $P^* = 0.3$ .  $F$  = fishing mortality rate (per yr),  $SSB$  = mid-year spawning stock biomass (mature female biomass in metric tons whole weight),  $Pr(SSB > SSB_{MSY})$  = proportion of replicates where  $SSB$  was above the point estimate of  $SSB_{MSY} = 246.6$  mt,  $R$  = recruits (1000 age-1 fish). Annual ABCs are a single quantity while other values presented are medians.

Year	F	Pr(F > $F_{msy}$ )	$P^*$	SSB	Pr(SSB > $SSB_{msy}$ )	R	ABC landings (1000 lb)	ABC discards (1000 lb)
2013	1.54	0.99	NA	150.285	0.03	106.423	NA	NA
2014	3.17	1.00	NA	101.240	0.02	96.623	NA	NA
2015	0.151	0.30	0.3	103.566	0.02	83.011	21.192	0.00229
2016	0.152	0.30	0.3	136.680	0.05	83.562	37.483	0.00405
2017	0.152	0.30	0.3	166.063	0.12	91.495	55.608	0.00601

Note1: The ABC values recommended by the SSC will be added after their April 28 – May 1, 2014 meeting and analyzed for the June 2014 Council meeting. The ABC values above (21,192 lbs ww in 2015; 37,483 lbs ww in 2016; and 55,608 lbs ww in 2017) can be compared with the emergency rule ACL of 224,100 lbs ww in 2014, **Figure 4**, and **Table 4** to see the expected level of reductions necessary. Again, the SEFSC is providing new projections to the SSC and hopefully these values will be higher than shown above in **Table 9**.

Note2: Preliminary planning suggests an assessment update could be conducted in 2015 (fall) using landings through 2014 with results presented to the SSC in April 2016. The Council would take final action at the June 2016 meeting, and the new ACL/regulations would be in place beginning in January 2017.

## Action 2. Establish an Annual Catch Limit (ACL) and Optimum Yield (OY) for Blueline Tilefish and Revise the ACL and OY for the Deep-Water Complex

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain the current annual catch limits and optimum yield for the deep-water complex (yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, silk snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, black snapper, and blackfin snapper). Do not separate blueline tilefish from the deep-water complex.

	Sector	Annual Catch Limit (pounds whole weight)
Deep-water complex	Commercial	376,469
	Recreational	334,556
	Total	711,025

NOTE: Alternative 1 (No Action) will contain the emergency rule actions (total ACL = 224,100 lbs ww; commercial ACL = 112,207 lbs ww; and recreational ACL = 111,893 lbs ww), if approved.

**Alternative 2.** Separate blueline tilefish from the deep-water complex and establish annual catch limits for blueline tilefish. The blueline tilefish ACL = OY = ABC. Specify commercial and recreational ACLs based on existing sector allocations (50.07% commercial and 49.93% recreational). The deep-water complex ACL would remain at current levels with the current blueline tilefish portion removed.

**Alternative 3.** Separate blueline tilefish from the deep-water complex and establish annual catch limits for blueline tilefish. The blueline tilefish ACL = OY = 90%ABC. Specify commercial and recreational ACLs based on existing sector allocations (50.07% commercial and 49.93% recreational). The deep-water complex ACL would remain at current levels with the current blueline tilefish portion removed.

**Alternative 4.** Separate blueline tilefish from the deep-water complex and establish annual catch limits for blueline tilefish. The blueline tilefish ACL = OY = 80%ABC. Specify commercial and recreational ACLs based on existing sector allocations (50.07% commercial and 49.93% recreational). The deep-water complex ACL would remain at current levels with the current blueline tilefish portion removed.

Council Staff Recommends moving Alternative 4 of Action 2 to the considered but eliminated from detailed consideration appendix given that the Council has not chosen to reduce the ACL by this amount in the past.

ACL values will be inserted when determined.



**COMMITTEE ACTION:** The Committee/Council should approve the range of alternatives for Action 2.

OPTION 1. ACCEPT ALTERNATIVES 1-3 TO BE ANALYZED FOR THE JUNE 2014 MEETING FOR ACTION 2 AND MOVE ALTERNATIVE 4 OF ACTION 2 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED CONSIDERATION APPENDIX.

OPTION 2. ACCEPT ALTERNATIVES 1-4 TO BE ANALYZED FOR THE JUNE 2014 MEETING FOR ACTION 2.

OPTION 3. OTHERS???

### **Action 3. Establish a Recreational Annual Catch Target (ACT) for Blueline Tilefish and Revise the Recreational ACT for the Deep-Water Complex**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain the current recreational ACT for the deep-water complex (yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, silk snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, black snapper, and blackfin snapper) for the commercial sector. Do not specify a recreational ACT for blueline tilefish.

**Alternative 2.** The recreational ACT for blueline tilefish equals the recreational  $ACL \times (1 - PSE)$  or  $ACL \times 0.5$ , whichever is greater. Adjust the recreational ACT for the Deep-water Complex to exclude blueline tilefish.

**Alternative 3.** The recreational ACT for blueline tilefish equals 85% of the recreational ACL. Adjust the recreational ACT for the Deep-water Complex to exclude blueline tilefish.

**Alternative 4.** The recreational ACT for blueline tilefish equals 75% of the recreational ACL. Adjust the recreational ACT for the Deep-water Complex to exclude blueline tilefish.

Council Staff Recommends moving Alternative 4 for Action 3 to the considered but eliminated from detailed consideration appendix given that the Council has not chosen to reduce the recreational ACT by this amount in the past.

ACT values will be inserted when determined.

**COMMITTEE ACTION:** The Committee/Council should approve the range of alternatives for Action 3.

OPTION 1. ACCEPT ALTERNATIVES 1-3 TO BE ANALYZED FOR THE JUNE 2014 MEETING FOR ACTION 3 AND MOVE ALTERNATIVE 4 OF ACTION 3 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED CONSIDERATION APPENDIX.

OPTION 2. ACCEPT ALTERNATIVES 1-4 TO BE ANALYZED FOR THE JUNE 2014 MEETING FOR ACTION 3.

OPTION 3. OTHERS???

**NOTE:** ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES FOR BLUELINE TILEFISH ARE BEING INCLUDED IN AMENDMENT 32 EVEN THOUGH THE COUNCIL IS WORKING ON A SEPARATE AM/DOLPHIN ALLOCATION AMENDMENT. THIS IS NECESSARY BECAUSE BLUELINE TILEFISH ARE BEING REMOVED FROM THE DEEPWATER COMPLEX AND NEW ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES MUST BE DEVELOPED FOR BLUELINE TILEFISH. IN ADDITION, AMENDMENT 32 IS SCHEDULED FOR FINAL APPROVAL AT THE SEPTEMBER 2014 MEETING AND THE GENERIC AM/DOLPHIN ALLOCATION AMENDMENT IS SCHEDULED FOR FINAL APPROVAL AT THE DECEMBER 2014 MEETING.

#### **Action 4. Specify Accountability Measures for Blueline Tilefish for the Commercial Sector**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain the current accountability measures for the deep-water complex (yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, silk snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, black snapper, and blackfin snapper) for the commercial sector. Do not specify new accountability measures for blueline tilefish for the commercial sector.

	<b>Sector</b>	<b>In-season Accountability Measures</b>	<b>Post-season Accountability Measures</b>
Deep-water complex	Commercial	Close if projected to reach ACL	If exceed ACL and at least one species overfished, reduce ACL in following year by overage

**Alternative 2.** If blueline tilefish commercial landings as estimated by the Science and Research Director reach or are projected to reach the commercial ACL, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to close the commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year. On and after the effective date of such a notification, all sale or purchase is prohibited and harvest or possession of this species in or from the South Atlantic EEZ is limited to the bag and possession limit. This bag and possession limit applies in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, or golden crab has been issued as appropriate, without regard to where such species were harvested, *i.e.*, in state or Federal waters. Additionally,

**Sub-alternative 2a.** If the commercial ACL is exceeded, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the commercial ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the commercial overage, only if the species is overfished.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** If the commercial ACL is exceeded, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the commercial ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the commercial overage, only if the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) is exceeded.

**Sub-alternative 2c.** If the commercial ACL is exceeded, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the commercial ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the commercial overage, only if the species is overfished and the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) is exceeded.

**Alternative 3.** If blueline tilefish commercial landings as estimated by the Science and Research Director reach or are projected to reach the commercial ACL, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to close the commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year. On and after the effective date of such a notification, all sale or purchase is prohibited and harvest or possession of this species in or from the South Atlantic EEZ is limited to the bag and possession limit. This bag and possession limit applies in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, or golden crab has been issued as appropriate, without regard to where such species were harvested, i.e., in state or Federal waters. Additionally, if the commercial ACL is exceeded, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the commercial ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the commercial overage.

Council Staff Recommends moving Alternative 3 for Action 4 to the considered but eliminated from detailed consideration appendix given that the Council is attempting to standardize accountability measures across all species. Further, payback is biologically more important if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded (see Sub-Alternative 2c. above).

**COMMITTEE ACTION:** The Committee/Council should approve the range of alternatives for Action 4.

OPTION 1. ACCEPT ALTERNATIVES 1-2C TO BE ANALYZED FOR THE JUNE 2014 MEETING FOR ACTION 4 AND MOVE ALTERNATIVE 3 OF ACTION 4 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED CONSIDERATION APPENDIX.

OPTION 2. ACCEPT ALTERNATIVES 1-3 TO BE ANALYZED FOR THE JUNE 2014 MEETING FOR ACTION 4.

OPTION 3. OTHERS???

## Action 5. Specify Accountability Measures for Blueline Tilefish for the Recreational Sector

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain the current accountability measures for the deep-water complex (yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, silk snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, sand tilefish, black snapper, and blackfin snapper) for the recreational sector. Do not specify new accountability measures for blueline tilefish for the recreational sector.

	Sector	In-season Accountability Measures	Post-season Accountability Measures
Deep-water complex	Recreational	None	If exceed ACL, reduce length of following fishing year if necessary by amount to ensure landing do not exceed the ACL

**Alternative 2.** If blueline tilefish recreational landings, as estimated by the Science and Research Director, exceed the recreational ACL, then during the following fishing year, recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings.

**Sub-alternative 2a.** If necessary, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the length of fishing season and the recreational ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the recreational overage, only if the species is overfished. The length of the recreational season and recreational ACL will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best scientific information available, that a reduction is unnecessary.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** If necessary, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the length of fishing season and the recreational ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the recreational overage, only if the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) is exceeded. The length of the recreational season and recreational ACL will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best scientific information available, that a reduction is unnecessary.

**Sub-alternative 2c.** If necessary, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the length of fishing season and the recreational ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the recreational overage, only if the species is overfished and the total ACL (commercial ACL and recreational ACL) is exceeded. The length of the recreational season and recreational ACL will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best scientific information available, that a reduction is unnecessary.

**Alternative 3.** If blueline tilefish recreational landings, as estimated by the Science and Research Director, exceed the recreational ACL, then during the following fishing year, recreational landings will be monitored for a persistence in increased landings. If necessary, the Regional Administrator shall publish a notice to reduce the length of fishing season and the recreational ACL in the following fishing year by the amount of the recreational overage. The length of the recreational season and recreational ACL will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best scientific information available, that a reduction is unnecessary.

**Alternative 4.** If recreational landings for blueline tilefish reach or are projected to reach the recreational annual catch limit, National Marine Fisheries Service will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the recreational sector for blueline tilefish for the remainder of the fishing year.

Council Staff Recommends moving Alternative 3 for Action 5 to the considered but eliminated from detailed consideration appendix given that the Council is attempting to standardize accountability measures across all species. Further, payback is biologically more important if the species is overfished and the total ACL is exceeded (see Sub-Alternative 2c. above).

**COMMITTEE ACTION:** The Committee/Council should approve the range of alternatives for Action 5.

OPTION 1. ACCEPT ALTERNATIVES 1-2C TO BE ANALYZED FOR THE JUNE 2014 MEETING FOR ACTION 5 AND MOVE ALTERNATIVES 3 & 4 OF ACTION 5 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED CONSIDERATION APPENDIX.

OPTION 2. ACCEPT ALTERNATIVES 1-2C AND 4 TO BE ANALYZED FOR THE JUNE 2014 MEETING FOR ACTION 5 AND MOVE ALTERNATIVE 3 OF ACTION 5 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED CONSIDERATION APPENDIX.

OPTION 3. ACCEPT ALTERNATIVES 1-4 TO BE ANALYZED FOR THE JUNE 2014 MEETING FOR ACTION 5.

OPTION 4. OTHERS???

## **Action 6. Establish Management Measures for Blueline Tilefish for the Commercial Sector**

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain the current management measures for blueline tilefish for the commercial sector. Do not implement a commercial trip limit for blueline tilefish.

**Alternative 2.** Establish a commercial trip limit for blueline tilefish from January to April of 100 pounds.

**Sub-alternative 2a.** Establish a commercial trip limit from May onwards of 1,500 pounds until 80% of the ACL is projected to be met. Then reduce the trip limit to 100 pounds for the remainder of the fishing year.

**Sub-alternative 2b.** Establish a commercial trip limit from May onwards of 2,000 pounds until 80% of the ACL is projected to be met. Then reduce the trip limit to 100 pounds for the remainder of the fishing year.

**Sub-alternative 2c.** Establish a commercial trip limit from May onwards of 2,500 pounds until 80% of the ACL is projected to be met. Then reduce the trip limit to 100 pounds for the remainder of the fishing year.

**COMMITTEE ACTION:** The Committee/Council should approve the range of alternatives for Action 6.

**OPTION 1. ACCEPT ALTERNATIVES 1-2C TO BE ANALYZED FOR THE JUNE 2014 MEETING FOR ACTION 6.**

**OPTION 2. OTHERS???**

Commercial 2012 landings for the deepwater complex (blueline tilefish landings comprise the bulk of landings) from the NMFS Quota Monitoring Website (2/18/14) were 383,951 lbs ww (112% of the 343,869 lbs ww quota) and the commercial fishery was closed on 9/8/12. Commercial 2013 landings were 272,947 lbs ww (73% of the 376,469 lb ww quota).

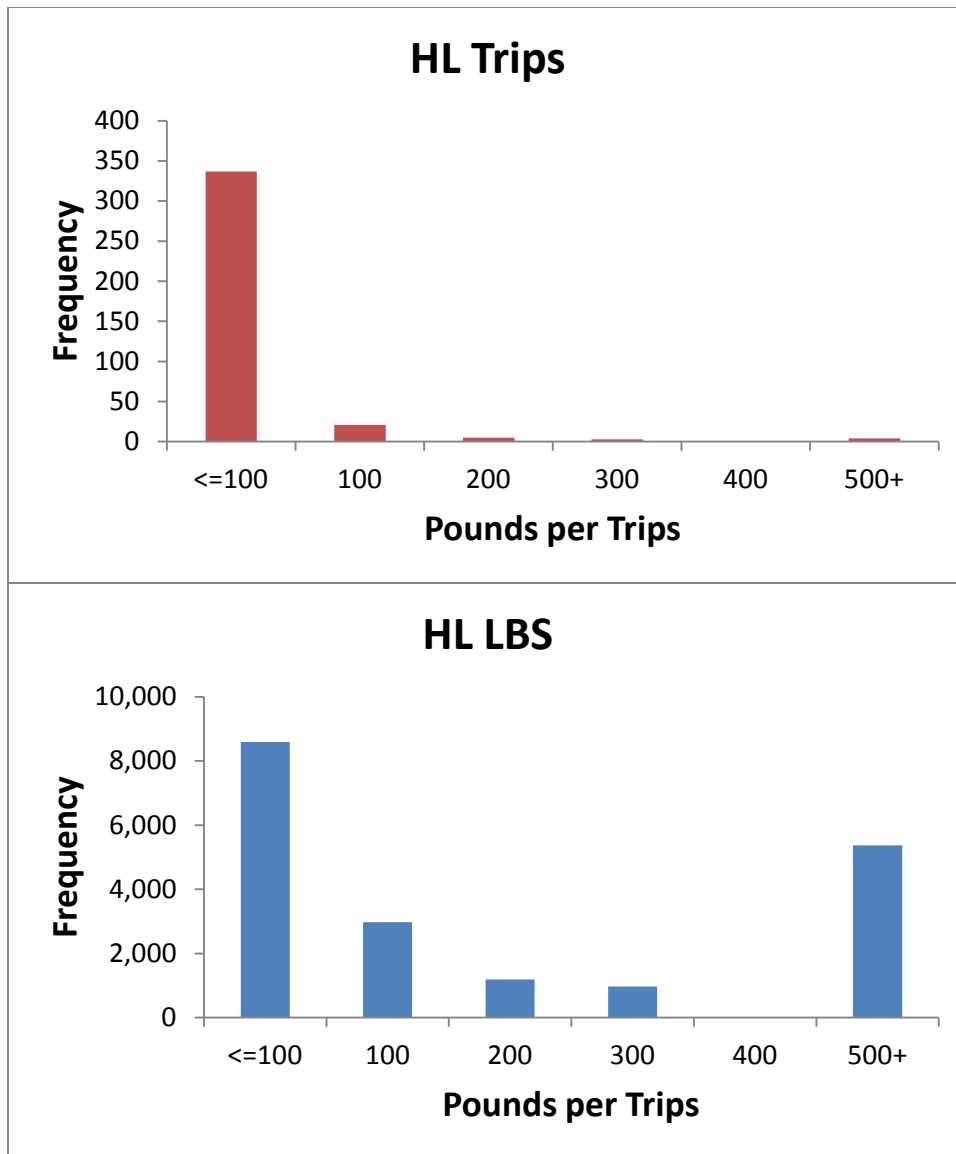
Looking at historical commercial catch by trip (some of which is confidential) back to 1996, some trends are evident. For hook-and-line, most trips landed below 100 lbs/trip but there have been some above 3,000 lbs/trip particularly in 2008 and 2009. For longline, most trips landed below 100 lbs/trip in the early years with a gradual shift to higher landings and, from 2008 onwards, most trips landed above 3,000 lbs/trip.

Looking at 2012 landings in more detail, the catch frequency by trip and pounds is shown in **Table 2, Figure 3a, and Figure 3b**. As can be seen, 91% of hook-and-line trips landed less than or equal to 100 lbs/trip representing 45% of the pounds harvested by hook-and-line. For longline trips, 11% of the trips landed greater than 4,500 lbs/trip representing 25% of the pounds harvested by longline. The impacts in terms of reduction in trips and/or landings can be seen in **Table 2** for various trip limits.

**Table 2.** Catch frequency table for commercial hook-and-line and longline sectors using 2012 commercial logbook data (lbs ww).

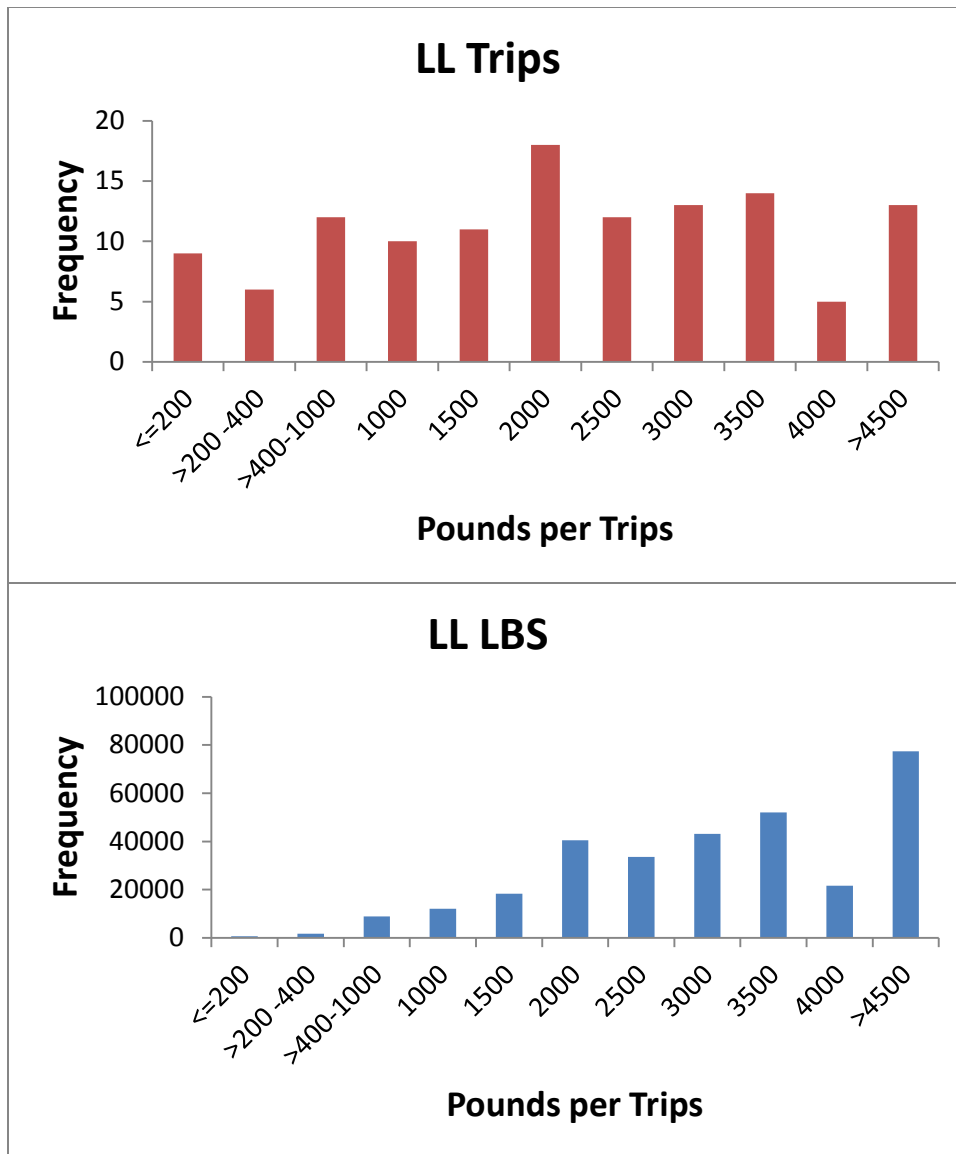
<b>Pounds ww</b>	<b>HL LBS WW</b>	<b>HL Trips</b>	<b>%Trips</b>	<b>%LBS</b>	<b>Pounds ww</b>	<b>LL Trips</b>	<b>LL LBS WW</b>	<b>%Trips</b>	<b>%LBS</b>
<b>&lt;=100</b>	8,590	337	91%	45%	<b>&lt;=200</b>	9	618	7%	0%
<b>100</b>	2,980	21	6%	16%	<b>&gt;200-400</b>	6	1,690	5%	1%
<b>200</b>	1,193	5	1%	6%	<b>&gt;400-1000</b>	12	8,903	10%	3%
<b>300</b>	974	3	1%	5%	<b>1000</b>	10	12,023	8%	4%
<b>400</b>	0	0	0%	0%	<b>1500</b>	11	18,286	9%	6%
<b>500+</b>	5,372	4	1%	28%	<b>2000</b>	18	40,445	15%	13%
<b>Totals</b>	19,109	370			<b>2500</b>	12	33,611	10%	11%
					<b>3000</b>	13	43,148	11%	14%
					<b>3500</b>	14	51,995	11%	17%
					<b>4000</b>	5	21,661	4%	7%
					<b>&gt;4500</b>	13	77,441	11%	25%
					<b>Totals</b>	123	309,821		





**Figure 3a.** Catch frequency for commercial hook-and-line using 2012 commercial logbook data (lbs ww).

Source: Jessica Stephens, NMFS SERO logbook data.



**Figure 3b.** Catch frequency for commercial longline using 2012 commercial logbook data (lbs ww).

Source: Jessica Stephens, NMFS SERO logbook data.

## Action 7. Establish Management Measures for Blueline Tilefish for the Recreational Sector

Note: Council may choose multiple preferred alternatives.

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** Retain the current management measures for blueline tilefish for the recreational sector. Blueline tilefish is included in the aggregate grouper bag limit of 3/person/day of: gag, black, snowy, misty, red, scamp, yellowedge, yellowfin, yellowmouth, golden tilefish, sand tilefish, coney, graysby, red hind, and rock hind.

**Alternative 2.** Remove blueline tilefish from the aggregate grouper bag limit.

**Alternative 3.** Establish a bag limit of blueline tilefish of 1/person/day.

**Alternative 4.** Establish a vessel limit of blueline tilefish of 1/vessel/day.

**Alternative 5.** Modify the recreational bag limit as shown above and modify the AM for the blueline tilefish recreational sector, such that NMFS will annually announce the recreational fishing season start and end dates in the *Federal Register* and by other methods, as deemed appropriate. The fishing season will start on \_\_\_\_\_ (Council to specify) and end on the date NMFS projects the recreational ACL will be met.

Note: If included, Alternative 5 will be added to the recreational AMs in Action 5.

Recreational catch by wave is shown in **Table 3** for 2012 and 2013. Expected dates when the recreational ACL would be met can be estimated from this information. The recreational ACL in the emergency rule (if approved) will be 111,893 lbs ww and would be exceeded in Wave 1 if 2014 catches are similar to 2013 or not exceeded all year if 2014 catches are similar to 2012 catches (**Table 3**). Recreational catches (**Table 4**; including all of Monroe County) have not exceeded this level from 2010 through 2012; however, catches did exceed this level from 2006 through 2009 (**Table 4**). Recreational 2013 landings for the deepwater complex (blueline tilefish landings comprise the bulk of landings) from the NMFS Quota Monitoring Website (2/13/14 with all Monroe County landings assigned to the Gulf) were 315,746 lbs ww without MRIP November/December and without headboat for all year. For 2012, recreational landings (MRIP plus headboat but no Monroe County landings) were 107,849 lbs ww.

The ABC recommended by the SSC from their April/May 2014 meeting, and the resulting recreational ACL, will be compared with the expected recreational catches to determine what level of bag limit is expected to keep the recreational sector at or below the recreational ACL. These analyses will be available at the June 2014 Council meeting.

**COMMITTEE ACTION:** The Committee/Council should approve the range of alternatives for Action 7.

**OPTION 1.** ACCEPT ALTERNATIVES 1-4 TO BE ANALYZED FOR THE JUNE 2014 MEETING FOR ACTION 7 AND MOVE ALTERNATIVE 5 OF ACTION 7 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED CONSIDERATION APPENDIX.

**OPTION 2.** ACCEPT ALTERNATIVES 1-5 TO BE ANALYZED FOR THE JUNE 2014 MEETING FOR ACTION 7.

**OPTION 3.** OTHERS???

**Table 3.** Recreational 2012 and 2013 blueline tilefish catch by wave.

Year	Wave	MRIP Landings (lbs ww)*	Year	Rec QMS Landings (lbs ww)**
2012	1	9,425	2012	
2012	2	3,767		
2012	3	15,961		
2012	4	33,064		
2012	5	18,906		
2012	6	7,679		
<b>Total</b>		<b>88,803</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>107,849</b>
2013	1	153,002	2013	
2013	2	9,525		
2013	3	7,125		
2013	4	41,617		
2013	5	3,080		
2013	6	212		
<b>Total</b>		<b>214,561</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>315,746</b>

*Note: Headboat landings are not included in the 2013 landings, but are included in the 2012 landings. Wave 6 for 2013 not available yet.	**Source: SERO Recreational QMS Website (2/13/14) Landings for Deepwater Complex (bulk of landings is blueline tilefish). 2013 data do not include headboat all year.
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Prepared by Mike Errigo & Gregg Waugh from MRIP and SERO Recreational QMS Website.

## Action 8. Establish a Rebuilding Plan for Blueline Tilefish

Blueline tilefish is currently overfished as defined by the current definition of the minimum stock size threshold (MSST). The Council is currently developing Regulatory Amendment 21 that considers revisions to the MSST for certain species in the snapper grouper FMU, including blueline tilefish. Depending on approval of those actions and the timing of Regulatory Amendment 21 and Amendment 32, blueline tilefish may not be overfished and a rebuilding plan would not be required.

Council Staff Recommends this action be removed given that this will be addressed in Regulatory Amendment 21.

**COMMITTEE ACTION:** The Committee/Council should provide guidance on the rebuilding plan.

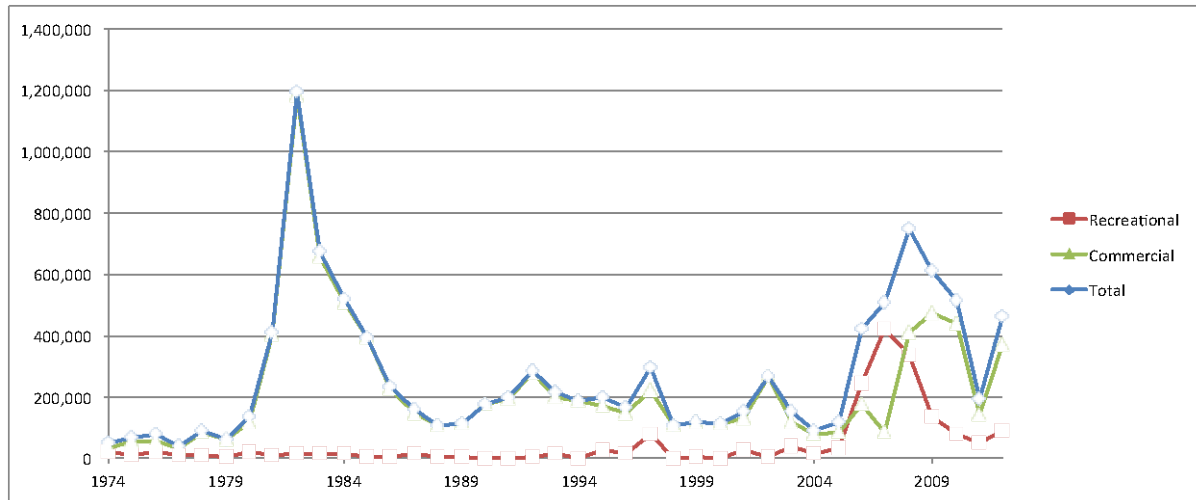
**OPTION 1. REMOVE ACTION 8 FROM AMENDMENT 32 GIVEN THAT THE NEED FOR A REBUILDING PROGRAM IS BEING ADDRESSED IN REGULATORY AMENDMENT 21 (MSST).**

**OPTION 2. OTHERS???**

**Timing approved at December 2013 meeting:**

- a. ✓SSC reviews assessment – October 2013
- b. ✓Scoping Webinar if EIS – November 7, 2013
- c. ✓Council receives assessment results and SSC recommendations – December 2013.  
Determine whether emergency action is warranted and provide guidance on timing and actions/alternatives to be included.
- d. ✓Council approved an emergency rule request. Letter dated 12/10 sent to SERO on 12/17/13.
- e. Letter to SEFSC requesting additional projection – John by \_\_\_\_\_.  
✓Letter Done 12/16/13.  
Projections due to Council staff by 4/7/14.
- f. SSC reviews projections at April 2014 meeting and provides report to Council for 1<sup>st</sup> BB
- g. SEFSC provides revised projections as necessary for 1<sup>st</sup> BB June; 2<sup>nd</sup> BB at the latest
- h. January – May 2014 – IPT/Staff work on amendment
- i. Draft Amendment 32: review, modify & approve for public hearings – June 2014 Council meeting
- j. Public Hearings – August 2014
- k. Review public hearing comments, review/modify amendment, and approve for formal review – September 2014
- l. Send document to NMFS for formal review – September 2014

Blueline tilefish landings (commercial, recreational, and total) from 1974 through 2012 are shown in **Figure 4** and **Table 2**.



**Figure 4.** Observed blueline tilefish landings by sector in the South Atlantic region, 1974-2012. Source: SAFMC 2013 from data shown in Table 4 from SEDAR 32.

**Table 4.** Observed blueline tilefish landings (lbs ww) by sector in the South Atlantic, 1974-2012 from SEDAR 32.

Year	Recreational	Commercial	Total
1974	18,519	33,000	51,519
1975	11,112	56,456	67,568
1976	19,560	55,774	75,334
1977	7,216	30,995	38,211
1978	9,547	82,713	92,260
1979	2,004	59,799	61,803
1980	19,049	118,264	137,313
1981	7,256	403,605	410,861
1982	15,934	1,180,617	1,196,551
1983	17,455	656,690	674,145
1984	13,602	506,472	520,074
1985	2,596	392,055	394,651
1986	2,179	228,678	230,857
1987	13,982	145,070	159,052
1988	1,200	107,083	108,283
1989	1,200	112,612	113,812
1990	757	175,125	175,882
1991	802	194,854	195,656
1992	2,782	279,529	282,311
1993	13,509	200,204	213,713
1994	146	188,238	188,384
1995	26,466	170,881	197,347
1996	15,306	148,246	163,552
1997	78,196	219,988	298,184
1998	259	107,654	107,913
1999	3,718	116,243	119,961
2000	419	112,433	112,852
2001	23,836	127,824	151,660
2002	3,352	265,558	268,910
2003	36,122	119,079	155,201
2004	12,813	76,709	89,522
2005	32,349	83,936	116,285
2006	246,511	173,002	419,513
2007	422,938	85,103	508,041
2008	332,915	412,178	745,093
2009	137,860	474,844	612,704
2010	76,059	438,049	514,108
2011	51,779	141,502	193,281
2012	88,803	370,729	459,532

## REFERENCES

SAFMC (South Atlantic Fishery Management Council). 1998. Comprehensive Amendment Addressing Sustainable Fishery Act Definitions and Other Required Provisions in Fishery Management Plans of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 11 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan). South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 1 Southpark Cir., Suite 306, Charleston, S.C. 29407-4699.

SEDAR 32. 2013. Stock Assessment Report. South Atlantic Blueline Tilefish. Available from the SEDAR website: [www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/](http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/)