

# Amendment 52

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

### *Catch Level Adjustments and Allocations for Golden Tilefish*

### Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Discussion Document

October 2021

## Background

The South Atlantic stock of golden tilefish was first assessed through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) in 2004. The benchmark assessment for golden tilefish, SEDAR 4, was completed in 2004 with an assessment period 1961-2002 (SEDAR 2004). SEDAR 25 was a standard assessment completed in 2011 with an assessment period spanning 1962-2010 (SEDAR 2011). Several important changes were made during SEDAR 25 (e.g. M, h, SSB units) that make it somewhat difficult to compare SEDAR 4 with later assessments. Current management of South Atlantic golden tilefish is based on an update of SEDAR 25 completed in 2016 with an assessment period of 1962-2014 (SEDAR 2016).

The Council received the results of SEDAR 66 Golden Tilefish Operational Assessment and the SSC's recommendations for the Overfishing Limit (OFL) and Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) at their June 2021 meeting. The SSC determined the stock is no longer experiencing overfishing, but there is a high degree of uncertainty in the stock status determination since the stock is being fished at or close to MSY. Council directed staff to begin work on a plan amendment to adjust catch levels based on the SSC recommendations and SEDAR 66.

History of Golden Tilefish Stock Status		
Assessment	Overfished	Overfishing
SEDAR 04 (2004)	No	No
SEDAR 25 (2011)	No	Yes
SEDAR 25 Update (2016)	No	Yes
SEDAR 66 (2020)	No	No

An application providing an overview of the fishery, including management history, landings, and assessment information, has been developed and can be found here: [https://safmc-shinyapps.shinyapps.io/SA\\_FisheryDataTilefish/](https://safmc-shinyapps.shinyapps.io/SA_FisheryDataTilefish/).

## Objectives for this meeting

- Provide recommendations on actions and range of alternatives to consider.
- Recommend any additional changes to management measures that should be considered for scoping.

## Tentative Amendment timing

June 2021	Receive SSC comments and recommendations on SEDAR 66
December 2021	Review AP comments and options paper, and approve for scoping
February 2022	Conduct scoping hearings
March 2022	Review scoping comments and AP input, review preliminary analyses, and provide guidance to staff
June 2022	Review modifications to the amendment, select preferred alternatives, and approve for public hearings
July/August 2022	Conduct public hearings
September 2022	Review public comment and approve all actions
December 2022	Review final draft amendment and consider approval for formal review
2023	Regulations effective

At the December 2021 meeting, the Council will review the Snapper Grouper AP comments and approve for scoping.

# Acceptable Biological Catch and Overfishing Limit

The SSC reviewed the golden tilefish stock assessment (SEDAR 66 2020) at their April/May 2021 meeting. The SSC found that the assessment addressed the terms of reference appropriately, was conducted using the best scientific information available, was adequate for determining stock status and supporting fishing level recommendations and addressed uncertainty consistent with expectations and available information. The SSC applied the ABC Control Rule and recommended the following ABCs and OFLs for golden tilefish (Table 1). Recommendations are based on landings and expressed in total removals. Landings recommendations have been calculated to account for dead discards.

**Table 1.** South Atlantic golden tilefish OFL and ABC recommendations in pounds gutted weight (lbs gw) and numbers of fish (Source: SSC Report May 2021).

OFL RECOMMENDATIONS		
Year	Landings (lbs gw)	Landings (numbers of fish)
2022	573,000	70,000
2023	562,000	69,000
2024	552,000	68,000
2025	543,000	67,000
2026	535,000	66,000

ABC RECOMMENDATIONS		
Year	Landings (lbs gw)	Landings (numbers of fish)
2022	418,000	51,000
2023	435,000	53,000
2024	448,000	54,000
2025	458,000	55,000
2026	466,000	56,000

## Proposed Management Changes

- **Adjust catch levels (annual catch limit) and revise annual optimum yield**
  - New annual catch limits are needed because of the updated ABC/OFL recommendations.
  - The current total ACL is 342,000 lbs gw and is equal to the current ABC.
  - The SSC recommended an alternative method for calculating ABC (75% Fmsy method) that allowed for a greater amount of harvest following the last

assessment. The larger P\* in the most recent recommendation is more in line with standard application of the Control Rule.

- SEDAR 66 Golden Tilefish Operational Assessment includes landings data using the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Fishing Effort Survey (FES). A new ACL would be specified based on the SSC’s recommended ABCs and the most recent assessment.
- Average total landings for the 5 most recent years included in SEDAR 66 (2014-2018) were 532,356 lbs gw.
- A typical range of total ACL options is shown in the following **Table 2**.

**Table 2.** Potential options for the total annual catch limit (ACL) for golden tilefish based on percentages of the acceptable biological catch (ABC).

Year	ACL=ABC (lbs gw)	ACL=95%ABC (lbs gw)	ACL=90%ABC (lbs gw)
2022	418,000	397,100	376,200
2023	435,000	413,250	391,500
2024	448,000	425,600	403,200
2025	458,000	435,100	412,200
2026	466,000	442,700	419,400

- **Given that total ACL may not exceed the ABC, what range of total ACLs should be considered?**
- **Revise sector allocations**
  - Sector allocations need to be revised due to the updated total ACL and the change to MRIP FES data.
  - The current allocations for the recreational and commercial sectors are 3% and 97%, respectively. These allocation percentages were based on applying the formula of sector annual catch limit = ((mean landings 2006-2008)\*0.5) + ((mean landings 1986-2008)\*0.5) to the landings dataset used in Snapper Grouper Amendment 17B that included recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program’s Coastal Household Telephone Survey.
  - The current commercial ACL is 331,740 lbs gw.
  - The current recreational ACL is 2,316 fish.
  - Applying the same allocation method to data used in SEDAR 66, including recreational FES data where applicable, would result in allocations of 96.70% and 3.30% for the commercial and recreational sectors, respectively.
  - **Are there additional allocation percentages that should be considered?**
- **Consider other changes to management**
  - Current recreational regulations:
    - Season: Jan 1-Dec 31 (In-season closure when ACL met or projected to be met)
    - Bag limit: Part of Aggregate Grouper Bag Limit of 3/person/day of: gag grouper, black grouper, snowy grouper, misty grouper, red grouper,

- scamp, yellowedge grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, sand tilefish, coney grouper, graysby grouper, red hind, and rock hind, with a limit of 1 golden tilefish per person per day.
- Size limit: None
  - Gear requirements: dehooking tool required, descending device required onboard vessel, non-stainless steel circle hooks required north of 28° North latitude.
  - Sale of recreationally caught fish prohibited.
- Current commercial regulations:
    - Season: Jan 1-Dec 31 (In-season closure when ACL met or projected to be met)
    - Trip Limits:
      - Longline trip limit 4,000 lbs gw
      - Hook and Line trip limit: 500 lbs gw
    - Size limit: None
    - Gear requirements: dehooking tool required, descending device required onboard vessel, non-stainless steel circle hooks required north of 28° North latitude.
  - Current accountability measures:
    - Recreational – If recreational landings of golden tilefish, as estimated by the Science and Research Director (SRD), reach or are projected to reach the recreational ACL of 2,316 fish, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the recreational sector for the remainder of the fishing year regardless if the stock is overfished, unless NMFS determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available. On and after the effective date of such a notification, the bag and possession limits for golden tilefish in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero.
    - Commercial – Hook-and-line component. If commercial hook-and-line landings for golden tilefish, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the commercial ACL (commercial quota\*) specified in §622.190(a)(2)(ii), the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the hook-and-line component of the commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year. Applicable restrictions after a commercial quota closure are specified in §622.190(c). If commercial longline landings for golden tilefish, as estimated by the SRD, reach or are projected to reach the longline commercial ACL (commercial quota) specified in §622.190(a)(2)(iii), the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to close the longline component of the commercial sector for the remainder of the fishing year. After the commercial ACL for the longline component is reached or projected to be reached, golden tilefish may not be fished for or possessed by a vessel with a golden tilefish longline endorsement. Applicable restrictions after a commercial quota closure are specified in §622.190(c).

- **Should the Council consider management changes to the commercial or recreational sector?**
- **Should the Council consider changes to accountability measures?**

**AP Action:**

RECOMMEND CHANGES THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR THE GOLDEN TILEFISH FISHERY THROUGH THIS AMENDMENT.