

Blueline Tilefish Preliminary Sector ACLs in the South Atlantic Region

Council members requested estimates of sector annual catch limits (ACLs) for Blueline Tilefish based on recent Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations.

The Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic SSCs recommended an acceptable biological catch (ABC) of 646,000 lbs ww for the area Cape Hatteras and north (combined Cape Hatteras [CH] + Virginia-North). Within this, the South Atlantic SSC recommended an ABC of 193,800 lbs ww for CH. For the area south of Cape Hatteras the SSC recommended 133,000 lbs ww. The combined ABC for the South Atlantic region is 326,800 lbs ww.

ABC values include landings and discards. For ACL development, ABCs were reduced using discard estimates from SEDAR 92.

Recreational data were derived from vessel trip reports (VTR, Mid-Atlantic), and Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) estimates under both the Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS) and Fishing Effort Survey (FES). VTR estimates assumed an average weight of 6 lbs per fish.

Tables 1 and 2 compare historic landings (2019–2023) with current ACLs based on SEDAR 50 and potential 2026+ ACLs (SEDAR 92).

Key Findings

- **Commercial sector:** Under 2026 ACLs, commercial catch in the South Atlantic would remain below the ACL, reducing the proportion harvested compared to current ACLs.
- **Recreational sector:** Results are variable and sensitive to survey method. From 2019–2023, recreational landings exceeded current ACLs in three years. Under FES estimates, projected landings would also exceed the 2026 recreational ACL in some years.
- **Regional trends:**
 - Cape Hatteras and South of Cape Hatteras catches fluctuated, with occasional large exceedances of recreational ACLs (notably in 2020 and 2023).
 - Overall South Atlantic commercial catches track closely with ACLs, while recreational estimates show wide variability depending on method used.

Tables 1 & 2 provide detailed landings, ABCs, preliminary ACLs, and comparisons by sector and region. These are not final values. These are estimates to aid in the discussion. The Council has not selected ACLs or allocations.

Table 1. The estimated landings of Blueline Tilefish from 2019 to 2023 from Virginia and northern areas (VA N), Cape Hatteras (CH), South of Cape Hatteras (S CH), and South Atlantic (SA, combined CH and S CH). Landings are provided for commercial, and different sources for recreational including vessel trip reports (VTR) and Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) based on Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS) and Fishing Effort Survey (FES).

Year	Area	Commercial	VTR	CHTS Recreational	FES Recreational
2019	VA N	22,759	96,477	96,477	76,089
2020	VA N	33,861	64,131	64,131	55,986
2021	VA N	27,332	54,413	323,375	305,371
2022	VA N	33,861	39,743	439,869	468,324
2023	VA N	27,332	42,167	319,874	398,768
2019	CH	45,097		89,091	106,402
2020	CH	70,543		361,698	741,713
2021	CH	85,458		142,991	185,499
2022	CH	86,587		14,085	13,734
2023	CH	86,381		329,175	363,101
2019	S CH	50,807		21,007	43,708
2020	S CH	45,968		30,298	99,012
2021	S CH	34,427		17,573	46,338
2022	S CH	33,382		15,538	39,171
2023	S CH	25,591		22,157	103,342
2019	SA	95,904		110,099	150,110
2020	SA	116,511		391,996	840,725
2021	SA	119,886		160,564	231,838
2022	SA	119,970		29,624	52,905
2023	SA	111,972		351,332	466,443

Table 2. Table 1. The ABCs and sectors ACLs of Blueline Tilefish from 2019 to 2023 from Cape Hatteras (CH), South of Cape Hatteras (S CH), and South Atlantic (SA, combined CH and S CH), and proportion of ACL harvested for based on current ACL and potential 2026 ACL. Landings are provided for commercial, and different sources for recreational including vessel trip reports (VTR) and Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) based on Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS) and Fishing Effort Survey (FES). **These values assume current allocations for the SA region and have not been selected by the Council.**

Year	Area	ABC	Com ACL	Rec ACL	Comparison of Com Landings Relative to current ACL	Comparison of Rec Landings Relative to current ACL	ABC for 2026 and Beyond	Reduction for Discards	Com ACL for 2026 and Beyond	Rec ACL for 2026 and Beyond	Comparison of Commercial Catch to 2026 ACLs	Comparison of Recreational Catch to 2026 ACLs
2019	CH	55,968					193,800	9,003	92,528	92,269	49%	115%
2020	CH	55,968					193,800	9,003	92,528	92,269	76%	804%
2021	CH	55,968					193,800	9,003	92,528	92,269	92%	201%
2022	CH	55,968					193,800	9,003	92,528	92,269	94%	15%
2023	CH	55,968					193,800	9,003	92,528	92,269	93%	394%
2019	S CH	178,000					133,000	3,398	64,892	64,710	78%	68%
2020	S CH	178,000					133,000	3,398	64,892	64,710	71%	153%
2021	S CH	178,000					133,000	3,398	64,892	64,710	53%	72%
2022	S CH	178,000					133,000	3,398	64,892	64,710	51%	61%
2023	S CH	178,000					133,000	3,398	64,892	64,710	39%	160%
2019	SA	233,968	117,148	116,820	82%	94%	326,800	12,400	157,420	156,980	61%	96%
2020	SA	233,968	117,148	116,820	99%	336%	326,800	12,400	157,420	156,980	74%	536%
2021	SA	233,968	117,148	116,820	102%	137%	326,800	12,400	157,420	156,980	76%	148%
2022	SA	233,968	117,148	116,820	102%	25%	326,800	12,400	157,420	156,980	76%	34%
2023	SA	233,968	117,148	116,820	96%	301%	326,800	12,400	157,420	156,980	71%	297%