

Dear Michael,

I would like to express my extreme disappointment with the SAMFC's decision regarding blueline tilefish in the mid Atlantic region. This decision was one based without any science at all. Please don't try to tell me that the stock assessment done almost 4 years ago in the south Atlantic is the best available science for the mid Atlantic. The MAMFC met last week to address the SAMFC's concerns and we all thought major strides towards sound management were made. I am a recreational fisherman as well as a member of the MAMFC tilefish advisory panel and a member of the recreational fishing industry. Using NMFS own best available science regarding recreational landings, there are none. We both know this is not the case but it is the best available science. The recreational landings reported by the for hire fleet in their VTR reports do not support a cut back from no bag limit to one per boat. Unlike the south Atlantic, we in the north Atlantic do not have a wide variety of the fish in the Grouper Snapper complex available to us. I don't understand how we got to where we are yet there is a 20 fish bag limit in the Gulf of Mexico per person with a limit of 40 per person for multi day trips. When I first started tilefishing in 2006, we did not catch blueline tilefish. Partly because we did not fish areas that contained a population and partly because there were not that many around. However, over the past 5 seasons, we encounter bluelines of all sizes in a wide range of areas including many where we only caught golden tilefish in the past. Does this sound like a fishery in decline. I'm no scientist but in this case it is apparent there is a very robust population of blueline tilefish in the mid Atlantic canyons. NMFS' own science says that there is virtually no north/south migration of blueline tilefish so it appears that there is a separate stock up here. I do agree we need an FMP for bluelines in the mid Atlantic along with much needed research and an accurate stock assessment. None of us wants to catch the last blueline tilefish.

Thank you,
David Arbeitman