

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

Options Paper

December 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) and several important changes to input parameters (e.g., natural mortality (M), catchability or efficiency of the fishery (h), SSB units). Current management of South Atlantic golden tilefish is based on an update of SEDAR 25 completed in 2016 with an assessment period

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

of 1962-2014 (SEDAR 2016). This amendment addresses the SEDAR 66 operational assessment for golden tilefish, which was completed in 2020, and includes recreational landings estimates using the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Fishing Effort Survey (FES). Revised catch levels would be specified based on the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC)'s recommended acceptable biological catch (ABC) and this most recent assessment.

The Council received the results of the assessment and the SSC's recommendations for the overfishing limit (OFL) and 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 maximum sustainable yield (MSY). The Council directed staff to begin work on a plan amendment to adjust catch levels based on the SSC recommendations and SEDAR 66.

An application providing an overview of the fishery, including management history, landings, and assessment information, can be found here: https://safmc-shinyapps.shinyapps.io/SA_FisheryDataTilefish/.

Objectives for this meeting

- Provide guidance on actions and range of alternatives to consider to adjust catch levels and sector allocations based on the new assessment.
- Consider any changes to management measures for scoping.
- Consider recommending 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

Draft Purpose and Need Statements

Purpose: The purpose is to revise the acceptable biological catch, annual optimum yield, total annual catch limit and sector allocations for golden tilefish based on the results of the most recent stock assessment.

Need: The need is to achieve optimum yield while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

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 ABCs and OFLs for golden tilefish (Table 1).

Recommendations were in total removals and were adjusted for discards so they are expressed in landings

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). Note: Any changes to catch levels would be effective in 2023 and the 2026 level would remain in place until modified.

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

Options for Proposed Actions

Action 1: Revise the golden tilefish total acceptable biological catch, and annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield (OY)

Purpose of Action: The SSC recommended a new ABC based on results of SEDAR 66 (2020), and the ABC, total ACL and annual OY must be adjusted accordingly. The Council cannot set the ABC or total ACL above their SSC's recommended 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 ABC Control Rule. SEDAR 66 included 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.

Option 1: (No Action.) The total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for golden tilefish are equal to the current acceptable biological catch (342,000 lbs gutted weight).

Option 2: Revise the acceptable biological catch based on the recommendation of the of the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for golden tilefish and set them equal to the updated acceptable biological catch. The 2026 acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield would remain in place after 2026 until modified.

Option 3: Revise the acceptable biological catch based on the recommendation of the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for golden tilefish and set them equal to 95% of the updated acceptable biological catch. The 2026 acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield would remain in place after 2026 until modified.

Option 4. Revise the acceptable biological catch based on the recommendation of the Scientific and Statistical Committee. Revise the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for golden tilefish and set them equal to 90% of the updated acceptable biological catch. The 2026 acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield would remain in place after 2026 until modified.

Table 2. The total ACL for golden tilefish under Options 1 (No Action) – 4 in gutted weight

Note: Given the timing of amendment development, new catch levels would likely be effective during 2023 fishing year. Number of fish remain the same throughout the time period because it is assumed that fish moving through age classes gain weight therefore increasing the available poundage, however this does not increase the number of fish.

Options	Total ACL (pounds gutted weight)				
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026*
1 (No Action)** Total ACL=current ABC	342,000	342,000	342,000	342,000	342,000
2*** Total ACL=updated ABC	418,000	435,000	448,000	458,000	466,000
3*** Total ACL= 95% updated ABC	397,000	413,250	425,600	435,100	442,700
4*** Total ACL=90% updated ABC	376,000	391,500	403,200	412,200	419,400

The 2026 ACL would remain in place until modified.

**Current ABC=ACL with CHTS estimates for recreational landings.

***Includes FES estimates for recreational landings.

Snapper Grouper AP Comments/Recommendations:

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel met October 19-21, 2021 and provided the following feedback and recommendations pertaining to golden tilefish.

Feedback:

- *Fishery needs recreational census rather than estimate due to low number of intercepts and high variability in resulting estimates.*
- *Reporting mobile applications may be useful once a reporting method is established.*

AP Recommendations:

- *That the Council set the total annual catch limit (ACL) equal to the updated ABC and retain the current sector allocations for golden tilefish.*

Committee Action:

Provide guidance on a range of options to develop.

Action 2. Revise sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for golden tilefish

Purpose for Action: 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 = $((\text{mean landings } 2006\text{-}2008) * 0.5) + ((\text{mean landings } 1986\text{-}2008) * 0.5)$ 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. 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. If the no action is selected for this action, the sector ACLs would be adjusted based on the total ACL set in Action 1 and the existing sector allocation.

Amendment 18B (2012) allocated 25% of the commercial ACL to the hook-and line component and 75% to the longline component. Such an allocation restored access to the resource by hook-and-line fishermen to proportions observed prior to 2006, and during periods when they have historically harvested golden tilefish (late summer to early fall). It was noted that if the hook-and-line component regularly reached its ACL in the future, the Council would consider increasing the allocation.

The current commercial ACL is 331,740 lbs gw, and the current recreational ACL is 2,316 in numbers of fish.

Option 1: (No Action). Retain the current commercial and recreational sector allocations, as applied to the revised total annual catch limit for golden tilefish. The current golden tilefish total annual catch limit is allocated 97% to the commercial sector and 3% to the recreational sector based on long and short-term landings histories. The commercial annual catch limit is split into two sectors with 25% is allocated to hook and line sector and 75% to the longline sector. Recreational ACL in numbers of fish is based on weight conversion (4.430052 lbs/fish) used in Regulatory Amendment 28 (2018).

Tables 3-5 present ACLs based on **ACL=ABC, ACL=95%ABC, and ACL=90%ABC with 97% of the annual catch limit to the commercial sector and 3% to the recreational sector.** Within the commercial sector 25% is allocated to hook and line sector and 75% to the longline sector. Recreational ACL in numbers of fish is based on conversion (4.430052 lbs/fish) used in Regulatory Amendment 28 (2012).

Table 3. Sector ACLs based on Total **ACL=ABC** with 97% of the annual catch limit to the commercial sector and 3% to the recreational sector. Within the commercial sector 25% is allocated to hook and line sector and 75% to the longline sector. Recreational ACL in numbers of fish is based on weight conversion in Regulatory Amendment 28.

Year	Total ACL= ABC	Commercial ACL (lbs gw) (97% of Total ACL)			Recreational ACL (numbers of fish) (3% of Total ACL)
		Total	Hook and Line (25%)	Longline (75%)	
2022	418,000	405,460	101,365	304,095	2,831
2023	435,000	421,950	105,488	316,462	2,946
2024	448,000	434,560	108,640	325,920	3,034
2025	458,000	444,260	111,065	333,195	3,102
2026+	466,000	452,020	113,005	339,015	3,156

Table 4. Sector ACLs based on Total **ACL=95% ABC** with 97% of the annual catch limit to the commercial sector and 3% to the recreational sector. Within the commercial sector 25% is allocated to hook and line sector and 75% to the longline sector. Recreational ACL in numbers of fish is based on weight conversion in Regulatory Amendment 28.

Year	Total ACL= 95% ABC	Commercial ACL (lbs gw) (97% of Total ACL)			Recreational ACL (numbers of fish) (3% of Total ACL)
		Total	Hook and Line (25%)	Longline (75%)	
2022	397,100	385,187	99,275	297,825	2,689
2023	413,250	400,852	103,313	309,937	2,799
2024	425,600	412,832	106,400	319,200	2,882
2025	435,100	422,047	108,775	326,325	2,946
2026+	442,700	429,419	110,675	332,025	2,998

Table 5. Sector ACLs based on Total **ACL=90% ABC** with 97% of the annual catch limit to the commercial sector and 3% to the recreational sector. Within the commercial sector 25% is allocated to hook and line sector and 75% to the longline sector. Recreational ACL in numbers of fish is based on weight conversion in Regulatory Amendment 28.

Year	Total ACL=90 % ABC	Commercial ACL (lbs gw) (97% of Total ACL)			Recreational ACL (numbers of fish) (3% of Total ACL)
		Total	Hook and Line (25%)	Longline (75%)	
2022	376,200	364,914	91,229	273,686	2,548
2023	391,500	379,755	94,939	284,816	2,651
2024	403,200	391,104	97,776	293,328	2,730
2025	412,200	399,834	99,958	299,876	2,791
2026+	419,400	406,818	101,704	305,114	2,840

Option 2: Allocate 96.7% of the golden tilefish total annual catch limit to the commercial sector and 3.3% to the recreational sector. This allocation is based on the allocation formula: Annual catch limit = ((mean landings 2006-2008)*0.5) + ((mean landings 1986-2008)*0.5) applied to the revised total annual catch limit that includes recreational landings from the Marine Recreational Information Program using the Fishing Effort Survey method. Recreational ACL in numbers of fish is based on weight conversion (4.430052 lbs/fish) used in Regulatory Amendment 28 (2018).

Tables 6-8 present ACLs based on **ACL=ABC**, **ACL=95%ABC**, and **ACL=90%ABC with 96.70% of the annual catch limit to the commercial sector and 3.30% to the recreational sector**. Within the commercial sector 25% is allocated to hook and line sector and 75% to the longline sector. Recreational ACL in numbers of fish is based on conversion (4.430052 lbs/fish) used in Regulatory Amendment 28 (2012).

Table 6. Sector ACLs based on Total **ACL=ABC** with 96.70% of the annual catch limit to the commercial sector and 3.30% to the recreational sector. Within the commercial sector 25% is allocated to hook and line sector and 75% to the longline sector. Recreational ACL in numbers of fish is based on weight conversion in Regulatory Amendment 28.

Year	Total ACL= ABC	Commercial ACL (lbs gw) (96.7% of Total ACL)			Recreational ACL (numbers of fish) (3.3% of Total ACL)
		Total	Hook and Line (25%)	Longline (75%)	
2022	418,000	404,206	101,052	303,155	3,114
2023	435,000	420,645	105,161	315,484	3,240
2024	448,000	433,216	108,304	324,912	3,337
2025	458,000	442,886	110,722	332,165	3,412
2026+	466,000	450,622	112,656	337,967	3,471

Table 7. Sector ACLs based on Total **ACL=95% of ABC** with 96.70% of the annual catch limit to the commercial sector and 3.30% to the recreational sector. Within the commercial sector 25% is allocated to hook and line sector and 75% to the longline sector. Recreational ACL in numbers of fish is based on weight conversion in Regulatory Amendment 28.

Year	Total ACL= 95% ABC	Commercial ACL (lbs gw) (96.7% of Total ACL)			Recreational ACL (numbers of fish) (3.3% of Total ACL)
		Total	Hook and Line (25%)	Longline (75%)	
2022	397,100	383,996	95,999	287,997	2,958
2023	413,250	399,613	99,903	299,710	3,078
2024	425,600	411,555	102,889	308,666	3,170
2025	435,100	420,742	105,185	315,556	3,241
2026+	442,700	428,091	107,023	321,068	3,298

Table 8. Sector ACLs based on Total **ACL=90% of ABC** with 96.70% of the annual catch limit to the commercial sector and 3.30% to the recreational sector. Within the commercial sector 25% is allocated to hook and line sector and 75% to the longline sector. Recreational ACL in numbers of fish is based on weight conversion in Regulatory Amendment 28.

Year	Total ACL=90% ABC	Commercial ACL (lbs gw) (96.7% of Total ACL)			Recreational ACL (numbers of fish) (3.3% of Total ACL)
		Total	Hook and Line (25%)	Longline (75%)	
2022	376,200	363,785	90,946	272,839	2,802
2023	391,500	378,581	94,645	283,935	2,916
2024	403,200	389,894	97,474	292,421	3,003
2025	412,200	398,597	99,649	298,948	3,070
2026+	419,400	405,560	101,390	304,170	3,124

Snapper Grouper AP Comments/Recommendations:

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel met October 19-21, 2021 and provided the following feedback and recommendations pertaining to golden tilefish.

AP Recommendations:

- *That the Council: set the total annual catch limit (ACL) equal to the updated ABC and retain the current sector allocations for golden tilefish.*

Committee Action:

- Provide guidance on a range of options to consider. Does the Council wish to consider revising the gear allocation?

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Should the Council consider management changes to the commercial or recreational sector?

Table 9. Current commercial and recreational regulations for golden tilefish.

	Commercial	Recreational
Season	Jan 1-Dec 31	Jan 1-Dec 31
Limits	<u>Sector Trip Limits:</u> Longline: 4,000 lbs gw. Hook and Line: 500 lbs gw.	<u>Bag Limit:</u> Part of Aggregate Grouper Bag Limit of 3/person/day, with a limit of 1 golden tilefish/person/day.
Size Limit	None	None
Gear Requirements	Dehooking tool required, descending device required onboard vessel, non-stainless steel circle hooks required north of 28° North latitude.	Dehooking tool required, descending device required onboard vessel, non-stainless steel circle hooks required north of 28° North latitude.

* In season closure when ACL is met or projected to be met.

Snapper Grouper AP Comments/Recommendations:

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel met October 19-21, 2021 and provided the following feedback and recommendations pertaining to golden tilefish.

Feedback:

- *Fishery needs recreational census rather than estimate due to low number of intercepts and high variability in resulting estimates.*
- *Reporting mobile applications may be useful once a reporting method is established.*
- *Application use is bigger issue than app development.*
- *Change season for hook and line to be different from long line: September or October, or after long line closes.*
- *Establish a stamp/endorsement for hook and line.*
- *Consider measures to extend long line season (possibly individual fishing quotas).*
- *Not much interest in reducing trip limit.*

AP Recommendations:

- *That the private recreational component have a census method of reporting deep water catch.*

Committee Action:

- Provide guidance on whether to consider changes to the commercial or recreational management measures.

Should the Council consider changes to accountability measures?

Commercial Accountability Measures

If commercial hook-and-line landings for golden tilefish reach or are projected to reach the hook-and-line commercial ACL, the hook-and-line component of the commercial sector closes for the remainder of the fishing year.

If commercial longline landings for golden tilefish reach or are projected to reach the longline commercial ACL, the longline component of the commercial sector closes for the remainder of the fishing year.

Recreational Accountability Measures

If recreational landings of golden tilefish reach or are projected to reach the recreational ACL of 2,316 fish, the recreational sector closes 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.

Committee Action:

- Provide guidance on whether to consider changes to the accountability measures.

Appendices

Appendix A. Table of past and present ABC, ACLs and landings for Golden Tilefish.

Table A1. Table of past and present ABC, ACLs and landings for Golden Tilefish.

Management Measures	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
ABC (gw)	668,000	668,000	668,000	655,000	558,000	558,000	323,000	342,000	342,000	342,000
Total ACL (gw)	625,000	625,000	625,000	625,000	558,000	558,000	323,000	342,000	342,000	342,000
Com. ACL H&L(gw)	541,295	541,295	114,678	143,872	121,962	131,941	74,445	85,141	87,616	82,935
Com. ACL LL (gw)	Combined	Combined	564,421	389,244	411,367	405,691	227,554	282,676	256,676	248,805
Com. Landings H&L (gw)	517,188	537,946	144,678	143,872	121,962	131,941	74,445	85,141	87,616	82,279
Com. Landings LL (gw)			564,421	389,244	411,367	405,691	227,554	282,676	256,676	242,051
Com. Overage/Underage H&L(%)	95.5	99.4	106.9	106.3	90.1	97.5	93.8	102.7	105.6	100.8
Com. Overage/Underage LL (%)			139	95.9	101.3	99.9	96.8	113.6	103.1	94.3
Rec. ACL (# of fish)	3,019	3,019	3,019	3,019	3,019	3,019	2,187	2,316	2,316	2,316
Rec. Landings, "Old" MRIP (# of fish)	3,627	4,143	1,357	3,595	13,010	1,746	3,112	15,638	2,894	2,539
Rec. Overage/Underage (%)	120.1	137.2	44.9	119.1	430.9	57.8	142	675	125	110

Appendix B. Accountability Measures.

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).