



**Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council**  
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## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** February 22, 2019  
**To:** Chris Moore, Executive Director  
**From:** José Montañez, Staff  
**Subject:** Golden Tilefish Specifications Review for 2020 Fishing Year

As part of the 2018-2020 multi-year specification process for golden tilefish, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), Tilefish Monitoring Committee (MC), and Council will review the most recent information to determine whether modifications to the current 2020 specifications are warranted.

From 2012 to 2015 fishing years, commercial landings ranged from 1.4 to 1.9 million pounds. Landings declined in 2016 fishing year to 1.1 million pounds which appears to be the result of a combination of lower catch rates and some vessel inactivity. However, in 2017 and 2018 fishing years, landings increased to 1.5 and 1.6 million pounds, respectively (see Table 1 of the 2019 Golden Tilefish Information Document).

The NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center provided a data update (through 2018) for golden tilefish to support this review. CPUE in 2018 increased compared to 2017. The increase in CPUE appears to be consistent with the 2013 strong year class that was estimated in the 2017 model update. However, the exact size of the strong 2013 year class remains uncertain without an update of the model. Commercial size distribution provides further evidence for the 2013 strong year class which is tracking the length mode into the kitten/small and medium market categories. Historic patterns of year class effects on CPUE continue to be evident. The catch distribution of fish landed is wide and is comprised of all market categories. In summary, the strong 2013 year class seems to be progressing as expected. Based on a review of this information, staff recommend no change to the 2020 fishing year specifications.

Our current 3-year specifications cycle (2018-2019-2020) ends with the 2020 fishing year (November 1, 2019 to October 31, 2020). However, given the stock assessment process and timing changes the Northeast Regional Coordinating Council recently approved, the next management track assessment update for golden tilefish is currently scheduled for 2021. Therefore, next year (2020), the Council will use a golden tilefish data update (and other relevant information) to set specifications for the 2021 fishing year only. In 2021, the results from the next scheduled golden tilefish management track assessment update will be used by the Council when setting

specifications for the 2022-2023-2024 multi-year specifications cycle. Lastly, when setting specifications for the 2025-2026-2027 multi-year specifications cycle, the Council will use the results from the next research track stock assessment for golden tilefish, which is currently scheduled for spring of 2024.