



April 2020 Council Meeting Report

The following summary highlights actions taken and issues considered at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s meeting April 2020 Council Meeting. This meeting was conducted by webinar due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Presentations, briefing materials, and webinar recordings are available at: <http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/april-2020>.

- During this meeting, the Council:
- Adopted golden tilefish specifications for the 2021 and 2022 (interim) fishing years
 - Voted to request an emergency action to allow a one-time 5% rollover of the unused 2020 fishing year golden tilefish IFQ allocation to the 2021 fishing year
 - Recommended no changes to the previously-approved blueline tilefish specifications for the 2021 fishing year
 - Approved a scoping document for the Black Sea Bass Commercial State Allocation Amendment
 - Reviewed the 2020 Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem Report
 - Discussed climate change scenario planning and plan for potential East Coast/Mid-Atlantic exercise
 - Received an update on South Atlantic for-hire reporting requirements

Golden Tilefish 2021 - 2022 Specifications

After reviewing recommendations from its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), Tilefish Monitoring Committee (MC), and Tilefish Advisory Panel (AP), the Council voted to maintain status quo golden tilefish catch and landings limits for the 2021 and 2022 (interim) fishing years, except for the incidental total allowable landings (TAL) which was reduced from the 2020 level by slightly over 2,000 pounds. The Council did not recommend any changes to the current recreational bag limit or commercial/incidental trip limit. These specifications are summarized in the table below.

In addition, the Council discussed options to help mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the fishery, which has experienced a drastic decrease in prices and low product demand. The Council passed a motion to request that NOAA Fisheries consider an emergency action to allow a one-time 5% rollover of the unused 2020 fishing year golden tilefish individual fishing quota (IFQ) allocation to the 2021 fishing year. This small roll-over of unused quota is intended to help the industry potentially recoup lost earnings due to COVID-19.

Summary of Golden Tilefish 2021 and 2022 (Interim*) Specifications	
Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC)	1,635,830 pounds
Commercial Quota – IFQ Fishery	1,554,038 pounds
Incidental Quota	70,621 pounds
Incidental Trip Limit	500 pounds
Recreational Trip Limit	8 fish per-angler, per-trip

**The 2021 management track assessment will be used to revise the 2022 interim management measures and set 2023 and 2024 specifications.*

Blueline Tilefish 2021 Specifications

The Council reviewed the 2021 blueline tilefish specifications previously set as part of the 2019-2021 specifications package. After reviewing recommendations from the staff, SSC, and MC, the Council determined that no changes to the 2021 specifications and management measures are warranted. These specifications are summarized in the table below.

The Council also reviewed the status of private permitting and reporting for blueline and golden tilefish which was approved with delayed implementation in 2017. Implementation was expected by May 1, 2020 prior to the COVID-

19 pandemic. Now, implementation may be slightly delayed to late spring/early fall. However, public outreach will continue to be provided by the Council and GARFO. Information regarding this action can be accessed here: <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2020/tilefish-rec-reporting-webinar>.

Summary of Blueline Tilefish 2021 Specifications	
ABC	100,520 pounds
Recreational TAL	71,912 pounds
Recreational trip limit	Private Boat: 3 fish USCG uninspected for-hire vessel (e.g., charter boats): 5 fish USCG inspected for-hire vessel (e.g., party boats): 7 fish
Commercial TAL	26,869 pounds
Commercial trip limit	500 pounds (until 70% of quota is met, then reduced to 300 pounds)

[Black Sea Bass Commercial State Allocation Amendment](#)

The Council reviewed a draft scoping plan and scoping document for a joint action with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission which will consider potential changes to the state-by-state allocations of the black sea bass commercial quota. This action will also consider whether these allocations should be added to the Council’s FMP. The Council approved the scoping plan and scoping document after agreeing to a few revisions to the document. Two scoping hearing webinars will be held on May 11 and May 14, 2020. Written comments will be accepted through May 31, 2020. Additional details are available at <https://www.mafmc.org/newsfeed/2020/bsb-com-state-allocation-scoping>.

[Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem Report](#)

Dr. Sarah Gaichas (NEFSC) presented a summary of the updates and findings from the 2020 Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem report. The comprehensive report is developed by the NEFSC in collaboration with a number of universities, non-profit organizations, and state agencies. First provided to the Council in 2017, these annual reports provide ecosystem-level indicators that evaluate the status and trends of ecological, environmental, economic, and social components of the Mid-Atlantic ecosystem to help integrate this information and allow the Council to make more informed management decisions. The 2020 report provided a new 2-page summary with infographics and visualizations to highlight key take home messages. The report also included new indicators for recreational fishing, social science information tracking commercial engagement, the spatial overlap of wind lease areas and fisheries habitat, and forage fish energy density. Council members and the public provided feedback and suggestions for continued refinement of future versions of the report. This report and other ecosystem-related resources are available at <https://www.mafmc.org/eafm>.

[Climate Change Scenario Planning](#)

The Council discussed a plan for the climate change scenario planning process identified as a priority in their 2020 Implementation Plan. Scenario planning is a structured process that can be used to strategize in the context of uncontrollable and uncertain environmental and sociopolitical factors. The Council received a presentation on the basics of scenario planning from Diane Borggaard of GARFO's Protected Resources Division, including examples of its marine resource management applications. The Council then discussed a planned coordinated East Coast climate change scenario planning initiative as a way to explore jurisdictional and governance issues related to shifting stock distributions. The Northeast Regional Coordinating Committee (NRCC) has formed a working group to plan for this initiative. The working group will meet this spring to discuss finding a facilitator for this process and forming a core team for the project which should include representatives from all three Council regions on the East Coast.

[South Atlantic Electronic Reporting](#)

George LaPointe provided an overview of new South Atlantic for-hire reporting requirements. On February 24, NOAA Fisheries published a final rule which establishes electronic reporting requirements for vessels with a federal charter/headboat permit for Atlantic coastal migratory pelagics, Atlantic dolphin and wahoo, or South Atlantic snapper-grouper. Electronic reports from charter fishermen will be due by Tuesday following the end of

each reporting week, which runs from Monday through Sunday. This action also modifies the reporting deadline for headboats from Sunday to Tuesday following a reporting week. Mr. LaPointe reviewed the data elements that will be required in electronic reports and described how permit requirements for multiple reporting programs will be handled. These requirements will become effective September 1, 2020. A number of outreach and training opportunities have been planned for later this year. More information is available at:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/southeast/et>.

Next Council Meeting

June 16-18, 2020

Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront
3000 Atlantic Avenue, Virginia Beach, VA 23451
Telephone: (757) 213-3000

<http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/june-2020-council-meeting>

NOTE: We are continuing to closely monitor the COVID-19 (coronavirus) situation. If necessary, this meeting may be conducted by webinar. Please check our website for updates as the June 2020 Council Meeting approaches.

The meeting dates are subject to change if this shifts to a webinar-based meeting.