

June 10, 2016

Fred Akers  
P.O. Box 395  
Newtonville, NJ 08346

Mr. Richard B. Robins, Chairman  
Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council  
Sent by email to: [richardbrobins@gmail.com](mailto:richardbrobins@gmail.com)

RE: MAFMC Blueline Tilefish Management Amendment Supplemental Comments

Dear Chairman Robbins:

Thank you very much for your call on May 15 to explain the unusual circumstance that the Council is facing regarding the addition of blueline tilefish as a new managed stock in the fishery with very little fishery dependent and fishery independent data to adequately inform the management science.

I understand that the Council quickly reacted to the discovery of significant landings in 2014 by establishing emergency management measures that could not be extended past June 2016 and then started the process of managing a new fishery to hopefully be completed before the emergency measures expired, very much to its credit.

I also understand that the 50% catch reductions compared to 2014/2015 catch necessary to stay within the recreational total allowable landings of 62,262 pounds became apparent after the public hearing document was created and most of the hearings had occurred, which is not the normal process.

Given these issues with the process and the Council's adoption of different management measures than those that were offered to the public for comment, I sincerely appreciate the Council's current efforts to receive and respond to new public comments, conduct a special listening session on 6/9/16 with your participation along with staff expert Jason Didden, and to schedule time on the Council's agenda on 6/15/16 to further discuss the blueline tilefish management issues.

However, I do not understand how splitting the recreational sector into 3 parts with the 7/5/3 bag limits will actually work to reduce total recreational catch to achieve the total allowable landings goal of 62,262 pounds.

As a private recreational boat owner and a recreational fisherman with great interest in catching and eating blueline tilefish, I think that the 3 fish limit for private recreational boat owners is more of a discriminatory marketing plan for the for hire vessel owners to shift fishing effort from private recreational boat owners to their vessels than to meet the new management goal through catch reductions.

For example, if I actually thought I could catch a 7 fish limit on a for hire inspected vessel or a 5 fish limit on a for hire uninspected vessel, while I would only be allowed 3 fish on my own vessel, that

could be a strong incentive for me to buy \$200+ tickets on for hire vessels and catch more blueline tilefish, not less.

According to the Blueline Tilefish FMAT Summary and Staff Recommendations dated 4/8/16, while the FMAT and Staff recognized the possibility of “effort transfer” from season closures (2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph page 3 of 6), they did not recognize the possibility of “effort transfer” from one sector to another under the sector separated bag limits, which could result in total catch increases.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph on page 1 of 6 of the Blueline Tilefish FMAT Summary and Staff Recommendations dated 4/8/16, the recommendations state that, ***“assuming that reporting can be obtained from all sectors, there is no information for the FMAT to recommend management uncertainty buffers at this time so the annual catch targets (ACTs) would equal the ACLs.”***

But then in the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph of page 3 of 6, the recommendations state that, ***“The private catch is also least understood given the lack of MRIP data for blueline tilefish, and until more is understood about the private catch, relatively low limits would help minimize the risk of high private catches shutting down the fishery much more quickly than expected.”***

My interpretation of the above statements is that the FMAT and the Staff recommended the post public information document sector separation and 3 fish limit for the private recreational vessels not as a measurable way to reduce the overall catch, but as the imposition of an uncertainty buffer only on the private recreational sector for the benefit of the entire recreational fishery.

Also in the 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph on page 4 of 6 in the FMAT Summary and Staff Recommendations, it states that, ***“The FMAT was skeptical that reporting compliance could be achieved or that differential per person trip limits by season and segment of the fishery could be effectively communicated”***, and, ***“A universal per person trip limit would be simpler to communicate and enforce, but may place more of a burden from the reduction on the party boat segment of the fishery.”***

The FMAT and the Staff evidently had a very strong bias for the “party boat segment”, which is specifically stated in paragraph 3 on page 3 of 6 as follows, ***“...the lower limit for private anglers was based on a presumption that private anglers also have lower catch rates and that there is more economic dependence on this fishery for party and charter operations (and especially for the 3-4 party boats that specialize in deep-drop fishing).”***

So rather than target the sectors of the recreational blueline tilefish fishery that had the highest catch rates to reduce the catch to achieve the SSC recommendation, the FMAT and Staff recommended to cut the private recreational vessels that had lower catch rates to 3 fish to favor “the 3-4 party boat owners that specialize in deep-drop fishing” with 7 fish to arbitrarily protect them and their economic dependence and not the economic future of the entire fishery and coastal economy.

Given the fact that catch data for private recreational boats is unknown, and that the catch data for the for hire sector is somewhat known, lowering the bag limit of the for hire vessels would provide a more measurable prediction for reducing the catch of blueline tile for 2017, if that is the Council's goal.

If the Council really wants to protect the blueline tilefish through compliance with the SSC's 50% reduction to 62,262 pounds, the Council should enact a 3 fish bag limit across all sectors for 2017.

The South Atlantic Council currently has a 1 fish limit and is about to change that to a 3 fish limit, so a 3 fish limit by the Mid-Atlantic Council would be consistent with that.

Another important measure in the blueline tilefish management amendment is that all recreational tilefish vessels would be required to purchase a permit and report their catch, which I strongly urge the Council and NMFS to implement prior to the 2017 fishing season.

The FMAT and Staff Recommendations address this in item #6 on page 5 of 6 as follows:

***“The FMAT discussed a staff recommendation that the HMS system be used to require private anglers to obtain a separate tilefish permit to catch golden or blueline tilefish. This is a hybrid of 6a and 6b. Staff agrees with public comments that a separate private tilefish permit be required rather than just an HMS permit, because this would provide better information on the universe of anglers interested in tilefish fishing. Since many offshore anglers are familiar with the HMS online permit interface, having that site be where tilefish permits are obtained should be relatively convenient. This would likely require that private anglers pay a permit fee to support the system, which is currently \$20.00 for HMS permits. Staff also recommends that reporting of golden/blueline tilefish be required through an ACCSP phone/tablet application before fish are brought off a vessel/water because surveys are unlikely to ever provide precise catch estimates for tilefish, and the only way to check compliance is to require reports to be completed and submitted before fish leave a boat. The FMAT does have concern about how to obtain high compliance and notes that a substantial outreach effort will be necessary. There was no specific FMAT recommendation for these alternatives but NMFS staff may have additional input at the Council meeting.”***

While I agree that a separate private recreational vessel tilefish permit be required at a cost to provide better information on the universe of anglers interested in tilefish fishing and that catch reporting be mandatory, I disagree with the staff recommendation that reporting be required through an ACCSP phone/tablet application before fish are brought off a vessel/water.

I agree with the above FMAT/Staff recommendation that the HMS online permit interface should be relatively convenient to be used by private recreational vessel owners to obtain their tilefish fishing permit, but there was no mention or consideration of the “Report Your Fish” application also on the HMS interface <https://hmspermits.noaa.gov/catchReports> for reporting recreational interaction with Bluefin tuna, swordfish, and billfishes within 24hrs.

Given that the existing “Report Your Fish” format already exists, it should be relatively cheap, easy, and fast to create a tilefish version on the HMS “Report Your Fish” interface.

Regarding reporting compliance, I suggest that actual documented reporting be a requirement for a current permit as a condition to obtain a future permit. If a permit is obtained and no tilefish are caught, there should be a requirement to submit a "0" catch report to qualify for a new permit. No report should trigger a closed account at year end.

Again, I strongly urge the Council and NMFS to implement permit and reporting requirements prior to the 2017 fishing season for private recreational vessel owners who direct on tilefish. This will not only establish the universe of recreational tilefish fishing vessels and provide much needed catch data to better and more fairly manage the tilefish fishery, it will also help to stop the mischaracterization, demonization, and discrimination of the private vessel recreational fleet by the for hire vessel owners and the Council. Blueline tilefish, like all wild fish, are a Public Trust Resource owned by everyone.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Fred Akers". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Fred Akers, private recreational boat owner and tilefish fisherman from NJ

**From:** [davearbeitman@comcast.net](mailto:davearbeitman@comcast.net)  
**To:** [Didden, Jason](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Blueline tilefish & upcoming meetings  
**Date:** Sunday, June 12, 2016 2:30:52 PM

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Jason,  
I would like to offer my comments:

Dear Chairman Robbins,

As you know, I have been an active participant in all aspects of the blueline tilefish FMP. I am not only active participant in this fishery but I am also a member of the recreational fishing industry as a tackle shop owner for the past 34 years. As a recreational fisherman I do all of my tilefishing in the mid Atlantic region on the party boat Voyager from Pt Pleasant Beach, NJ. 55 weeks ago I was able to keep as many blueline tilefish as I wanted and two weeks later I was limited to 7 per trip regardless of the length of the trip. Now one year later, even after the MAFMC voted to continue the 7 fish per person per trip for party boat anglers as part of the new blueline tilefish FMP there is a possibility I might be further restricted to as few as 5 fish per trip regardless of the length of the trip. Reducing me to 5 fish will result in me taking less trips each year. On average each trip costs me about \$900.00. Taking fewer trips will not only have a negative effect on my quality of life but it will also have a negative economic impact on the Captain and crew of the Voyager. As a business owner, further restrictions will result in significantly reduced sales of blueline tilefish tackle, including rods, reels, tilefish rigs and sinkers, line, etc. Between my store and e commerce site, I sell blueline tilefish tackle throughout the entire east coast as well as the Gulf of Mexico. I don't know about the Council members but as for myself, I cannot afford to lose as much as 20% of my yearly income. Anyone involved in this process knows this mess is a direct result of the extremely low ABC recommendation from the MAFMC SSC based on very little data and the same process used to determine the black sea bass ABC rather than using the same methodology used to establish the golden tilefish ABC. For whatever reasons the Council voted to accept this ABC and approve the FMP. Now, after approving the FMP the Council is considering revisiting certain aspects of the plan. It seems unfair that some of the original recommendations were dismissed before due to the ultra conservative ABC but now the Council is considering liberalizing recreational landings without any additional quota. We were told additional landings for multi day trips were not possible due to the low ABC. We were also told a full 12 month season was also no longer possible due to the low ABC and we were also told that the disparity in bag limits among the recreational user groups was the only way to try and keep from exceeding the recreational quota. How is it now possible to tweak these again without gaining more quota and without exceeding the recreational quota? I have a couple of my own suggestions for the Council to consider:

1. Allow the few party boats in this fishery to declare their season; May 1 to Oct 31 or Oct 1 to March 30 and allow a 7 fish daily bag with an additional 3 fish per person for trips lasting over 30 hours.
2. For the rest of the recreational community including 6 pack charter boats continue with a season from May 1 to Oct 31 and a bag limit of 5 per person.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment and "Thank You" Jason for all of your hard work. It is not easy trying to make chicken salad from chicken waste.  
David Arbeitman

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**From:** "Jason Didden" <jdidden@mafmc.org>  
**To:** "Jason Didden" <jdidden@mafmc.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 3, 2016 1:54:30 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Blueline tilefish & upcoming meetings

Fyi the tilefish briefing docs are available at: <http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/june-2016>.

Jason

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**From:** Didden, Jason  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 31, 2016 10:42 AM  
**To:** Didden, Jason <jdidden@mafmc.org>  
**Subject:** Blueline tilefish & upcoming meetings

Greetings Tilefish AP members,

Due to concerns recently raised by the public regarding the recreational [blueline tilefish measures recommended by the Council at its last meeting](#), the Council has scheduled time at its [June meeting](#) to potentially reconsider those recommendations. To further facilitate public input, the Council will also be hosting a [public listening session via webinar](#) on June 9 at 7pm. During the webinar, staff will review the rationale for the Council's recommendations and take questions and comments. Public comments will be summarized and provided to the Council.

Please call if you have any questions,

Thanks,  
Jason

Jason Didden  
[jdidden@mafmc.org](mailto:jdidden@mafmc.org)  
[www.mafmc.org](http://www.mafmc.org)

(302) 526-5254 (direct)  
(302) 397-1131 (cell)  
(302) 674-5399 (fax)



**JUNE, 8, 2016**

**TO: MAFMC**

**FROM: Steve Cannizzo – BROOKLYN VI, Sheepshead Bay, NY**

**CC: Jason Didden**

**SUBJECT. “Reconsideration” of Recreational Blueline Tilefish measures**

Chris Moore, Richard Robbins, and Council Members;

Thank you for your time in reading my thoughts on MAFMC Memorandum ‘Blueline Tilefish Recreational Specifications’ dated June 2, 2016 which now has been drafted as the MAFMC is being asked at the upcoming June 2016 meeting to reconsider the regulatory measures put into place for the recreational sector.

I find it extremely troubling to see private vessel fishermen mention that the actions taken and motions passed at the April 2016 meeting by the Mid-Atlantic Council are being called “highly discriminatory”, “unprecedented”, “actions were deliberately deceptive in nature”, and worse of all, “arbitrary and capricious decisions.”

Few if any recreational fishermen, whether in the party, charter or private vessel sub-sectors would support the extremely constrained ABC which many council members continually voiced concerns over as a starting point for the FMP as their will be a very high likelihood of reported overages within the following year resulting in accountability measures soon after. As upsetting as we had come to see transpire on Wednesday of this meeting were the motions being passed which whittled down a traditional full year fishery to a now shortened six month open period along with recreational sector separation as far as possession limits allowed for each of the three defined recreational sub-sectors.

I again emphasize, few fishermen who target Blueline Tilefish would support moving from an extremely sustainable year around fishery to one where the season and possession limit is reduced to where it not only causes a direct negative economic impact to fishing businesses, but also will now lead to decreased fishing opportunities for ALL recreational fishermen in the future, this due to the preposterously low ABC that was set.

A number of party, charter and private vessels fishermen have been involved in the process since the Emergency Action was implemented, and we have all done our best to provide the most accurate and unbiased information throughout the scoping process to help in the development of the FMP.

From MAFMC meetings, AP webinars, a Delphi workshop, and seen written within earlier various public comments, we have come to find out that the party boat sub-sector was by far the most compliant in filing accurate VTR data and reporting historical landings over the past decade. The for-hire uninspected charter sector was noted to be less compliant, either due to issues of not reporting or lacking in the knowledge that “6-pack” vessels are required to report Blueline Tilefish landings. Most troubling was the questions concerning the private vessel sub-sector that were voiced throughout the process with great concerns of:

- How many private vessels directly fish for Blueline Tilefish
- The repeated mention during the Q&A in the Delphi Process of most trips for the private vessel sub-sector being mixed between top water and bottom, day and overnight troll/chunk fishing trips
- Lack of ANY MRIP reporting or documented harvest estimates over the past decade (on the MRIP data query)
- Concerns about accurate “if any” reporting by this sub-sector in the near future once the FMP is implemented



Due to these concerns about what occurs onboard private vessels with either little if any oversight and monitoring by the USCG while fishing offshore, lack of state enforcement to check on the compliance of the current regulatory possession limit at the dock, and/or what would be captured through MRIP dockside intercepts or phone survey reporting that had much to do with crafting the motion that passed calling for sector separation and the party/charter/private vessel - 7/5/3 possession limit.

Recreational sector separation is NOT “unprecedented” along the east coast and has been used by a few southern New England and Mid-Atlantic states over the past years in the black sea bass and scup fishery, along with its use for many years in the BFT fishery with the distinction between HMS Charter/Headboat and HMS Angling limits.

As it relates to the economic impact in creating sector separation in the recreational Blueline Tilefish fishery, the impact is most negative for the party boat sub-sector which on average carries from 20 – 45 fishermen on anywhere from a handful up to 25 trips during the calendar year. The negative economic impact of fewer fishing opportunities and less fishermen making these long range offshore trips due to such a constrained possession limit, not only directly impacts the livelihood of the owner, captains and crew members onboard those party boats, along with the secondary effect at the gas dock of thousands of gallons less fuel being sold due to lost trips, fewer cases of bait being purchased and much less terminal tackle being sold to fishermen who fish upon these inspected vessels.

It begs one to wonder when reading the three public comments that are written in the first person, “I”, neglect the vast number of fishermen who do not own “six figure and more” dollar private vessels, or have access to one and rely upon the party boat industry to be taken out safely, offshore fishing on professionally operated and USCG inspected vessel.

The party boat industry has always provided this service to ALL fishermen over the past century, thus no “discrimination” or “direct intention to disenfranchise” any one or any group of fishermen in creating sector separation in this particular fishery. This was a result and the outcome of, and due to the pitiful allowance of Blueline Tilefish that now has to be shared amongst three recreational user groups.

I doubt there would be anyone that attended for two days at the April MAFMC Blueline Tilefish discussion of the FMP that would classify the actions taken by any council member being “deceptive in nature” or “arbitrary and capricious.” Those council members overwhelmingly voiced great worry and concern over both the **“process and implication of their actions”**, and in the end the consensus was that there would be “shared regulatory pain” amongst the three sub-sectors with the loss of fishing opportunities and differential bag limits between the three sub-sectors.

Time and again the discussion came down to providing the greatest access to the fishery, that being during the late spring, summer and early fall period when most recreational fishermen do go fishing, and to the sub-sector that continually has provided the most accurate and reliable data on this fishery, those on party boats.

Again I must thank Jason Didden for his detailed work on this fishery and his outreach in continually keeping us updated on the Blueline Tile fishery.

Best Regards,

Steven Cannizzo

BROOKLYN VI

Sheepshead Bay, NY

**From:** [Moore, Christopher](#)  
**To:** [COUNCIL - Voting](#); [CouncilNonVoting](#); [Staff-MAF](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Blueline Closures  
**Date:** Friday, June 10, 2016 2:54:14 PM

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fyi

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**From:** Didden, Jason  
**Sent:** Friday, June 10, 2016 1:13 PM  
**To:** Moore, Christopher <[cmoore@mafmc.org](mailto:cmoore@mafmc.org)>  
**Cc:** Robins, Rick <[richardbrobins@gmail.com](mailto:richardbrobins@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** FW: Blueline Closures

**From:** Rudee Angler [<mailto:rudeeangler@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Friday, June 10, 2016 1:02 PM  
**To:** Didden, Jason <[jdidden@mafmc.org](mailto:jdidden@mafmc.org)>; Robins, Rick <[richardbrobins@gmail.com](mailto:richardbrobins@gmail.com)>  
**Cc:** Feller, Skip <[sfeller3@verizon.net](mailto:sfeller3@verizon.net)>  
**Subject:** Blueline Closures

Council Members,

It has come to my attention that the discussion pertaining to the Blueline Tilefish is still going on, so once again, I would like to request what would make the most sense as far as sustaining the fishery and also the businesses who rely so greatly on these fish.

My request is to group the Tilefish season with the Seabass season, thus meaning being open May 15 through September 21 and October 22 through December 31. Doing so would mean an extra 15 days of closure at the beginning and an extra month of closure at the end.

Having the season closed at this time would enable the headboats to continue with their 7 fish bag limit, while limiting the charter boats to a 5 fish bag limit and the recreational boats to a 3 fish bag limit.

While it is the worst case scenario, the only other option we could potentially sustain business on would be to have the closures as previously stated above; however, to drop the headboat bag limit to 5 fish per person along with the charter boats and to keep the recreational bag limit at 3 per person.

I would like to reiterate the fact that any type of change is going to be detrimental to many businesses so these requests are to allow many of us to simply stay in business.

Skip Feller

June 12, 2016

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

800 North State Street, Suite 201

Dover, DE 19901

Chairman Robins and Council Members,

I am writing concerning the Council's "revisiting" of both the bag limit and season for Blueline Tile for the 2017 year. My concern is that the council is reopening something that has already been decided. This has been done as a few stakeholders that didn't deem it necessary to attend the Council meeting in Montauk, NY in April subsequently were unhappy with the proposed regulations. I, for one, have attended Emergency Action Webinars, scoping meetings, Delphi Catch Panels, AP Webinars, Public Meetings, AND both the Monday and Wednesday meetings in Montauk in April. While not totally satisfied with the outcome, I understand how we got there and why. This "do-over" seems to fly in the face of all of the above as I do not want to see all that we have worked for get up-ended at the last moment. If that is the case then we should revisit the pathetically low ABC that is putting this fishery on the path to failure.

I know that one of the comments submitted spoke of the 3/5/7 bag limit for private, uninspected for-hire and inspected for-hire vessels as punitive. It was, and still is, my understanding that the bag limit is proportional to the catch information we have on each sub-sector. It is not punitive but cautionary in that there is greater regulatory uncertainty in giving larger bag limits to those we know the least about. I hope the Council understands this and chooses this option.

Pertaining to season closure, I feel that we should keep closed that which is necessary to guarantee the inspected for-hire sector a reasonable bag limit of 7 fish. Going down to 5 fish in the inspected for-hire sector severely limits the appeal of the trip and makes them significantly less sellable causing business to suffer. It should always be noted that head boats, and to a lesser extent, charter boats (6 packs) are the vehicles by which recreational fisherman access this

fishery. Most people are not fortunate enough to be able to buy a \$200,000+ vessel to go fishing on. They go on for-hire boats.

Private vessels and uninspected for-hire vessels can mix and match different fisheries in the same trip, the so called stop and drop. This means dropping for Tile as a fallback on a poor tuna or marlin trip or just adding a different type of table fare to that already caught. This is exceptionally difficult to do in the inspected for-hire sector as people frequently want tile or nothing. I am not looking to disadvantage other recreational sub-sectors but I feel that the inspected for-hire sector has given the best data on an otherwise data non-existent fishery and is being punished for it.

Below are some possible scenarios that I feel the Council should consider if they fail to move ahead with the 3/5/7 bag limit and season of May1-October 31.

1 -If a bag limit of less than 7 fish is selected, please re-open the discussion of option 12d of the management plan. This option was not brought up when the bag limit was going to be 7 fish but should be brought up if the bag limit is to be 5 fish. In the interest of fairness I suggest we look at the Gulf of Mexico Blueline regulations as precedent, to wit;

**§ 622.382 Bag and possession limits.**

(2) *Possession limits.* A person who is on a trip that spans more than 24 hours may possess no more than two daily bag limits, provided such trip is on a vessel that is operating as a charter vessel or headboat, the vessel has two licensed operators aboard, and each passenger is issued and has in possession a receipt issued on behalf of the vessel that verifies the length of the trip.

On my boat we have to travel from 100-150 miles each way for good Blueline Tile fishing. These distances require longer trips lasting from 32-46 hours. By example, it is inherently unfair for a person fishing from Virginia Beach, about 50 miles to the fishing grounds, to fish on Monday, go home with a limit, and then fish again on Tuesday catching a second limit when my customers are out there the same 2 days and can only keep half as many fish. Option 12d contemplates a trip longer than 24 hours to insure fairness. My customers are also part of the recreational fishery and, as such, should not be disadvantaged simply because

they live in a Mid-Atlantic state that is further from the fishing grounds than others.

2-Do not pigeonhole inspected for-hire operators to fish during months that do not help them economically. The few operators in this fishery have differing needs and times of year when they fish for Blueline Tile. Allow inspected for-hire vessels to obtain a letter of authorization to fish only those waves/months that they choose within a predetermined number of waves/months. This declaration can be made prior to the fishing year. Please note that we are talking about 3 or maybe 4 boats that are actively involved in the fishery. In the alternative, use history to allow each for-hire vessel to fish a certain amount of trips per year or days at sea so that we can access the fishery at the best time for our particular needs.

3-Keep waves 1 and 2 closed and close wave 5 but open wave 6 while keeping the bag limit at 7 fish for for-hire inspected vessels.

4-Align the Blue Line Tile season with the Federal Sea Bass Season keeping the bag limit at 7 fish for for-hire inspected vessels.

Please take the time to review the possibilities of the above suggestions before making any decision reducing the bag limits on Blueline Tile.

In closing I would like to add that the entire process regarding the Mid Atlantic's management of the Blueline Tilefish fishery has been unbiased, fair, and transparent. I hope that the Council maintains the approach that it voted for at its April meeting.

Thank You,

Jeff Gutman, F/V Voyager

CC: Jason Didden

**From:** [Moore, Christopher](#)  
**To:** [COUNCIL - Voting](#); [CouncilNonVoting](#); [Staff-MAF](#)  
**Subject:** FW: BLT Listening Session Comment, Keith Neal  
**Date:** Friday, June 10, 2016 2:55:03 PM

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fyi

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**From:** Didden, Jason  
**Sent:** Friday, June 10, 2016 12:56 PM  
**To:** Moore, Christopher <[cmoore@mafmc.org](mailto:cmoore@mafmc.org)>  
**Subject:** BLT Listening Session Comment, Keith Neal

I am creating a summary of the public comments from the 6/7 listening session for blueline tilefish. The following comment was entered into the chat window by an individual who did not have an audio connection.

The proposed recreational measures for blueline tilefish off the Mid-Atlantic will decimate my blueline tilefish charter operation. As a uninspected for-hire vessel, I conduct "tilefile and seabass" trips from Wachapreague, VA. As you are aware this fishery, off of the Mid-Atlantic, is located on the edges of the continental shelf (approximately 53 miles from land). The proposed per person bag limit reduction for uninspected for-hire vessel (7 down to 5) will have dire impact on my customer base. I strongly suggest Council keep uninspected for-hire vessel bag limit as 7 fish per person to be competitive with inspected for-hire vessels.

The per angler costs on inspected for-hire vessels is dramatically less that uninspected for-hire vessels due to number of for hire passengers each vessel is licensed to carry. Additionally, during the winter months, I carry for hire charters to fish for black sea bass that occupy the same waters as blueline tilefish. For the sustainment of the blueline tile fishery, and reduce mortality, any closure period should be based on current closure period for black sea bass.

Additionally, proposed bag limits will more than likely have unintended consequences of producing much high mortality rates within the blueline tile fishery than at present. Additionally, we own a business that provides lodging for fishermen in Wachapreague. These fishermen, are recreationally permitted and reducing their blueline tilefish bag limit from 7 to 3 per person will have severe consequences for our lodging business.

In closing, it is my hope that the Council keep uninspected for-hire vessel and inspected for-hire vessels bag limit the same and consider a more moderate approach to the proposed bag limit for recreationally permitted vessels. As a small business owner, your decision on this matter will have major ramifications on both my charter operation and lodging business.

Capt Keith Neal: Capt Keith NealTeaser Sportfishing, LLC.Teasers Fisherman's Lodge,  
LLC.Wachapreague, VA. 23480

Jason Didden  
[jdidden@mafmc.org](mailto:jdidden@mafmc.org)

[www.mafmc.org](http://www.mafmc.org)

(302) 526-5254 (direct)  
(302) 397-1131 (cell)  
(302) 674-5399 (fax)





**From:** [Moore, Christopher](#)  
**To:** [COUNCIL - Voting](#); [CouncilNonVoting](#); [TechStaff](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Blueline Tilefish  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 07, 2016 9:41:21 AM

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fyi

**From:** Richard Robins [mailto:[richardbrobins@gmail.com](mailto:richardbrobins@gmail.com)]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 07, 2016 8:48 AM  
**To:** Moore, Christopher <[cmoore@mafmc.org](mailto:cmoore@mafmc.org)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Blueline Tilefish

FYI

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Ken Neill <[jackcrevelle@msn.com](mailto:jackcrevelle@msn.com)>  
**Date:** Mon, Jun 6, 2016 at 4:20 PM  
**Subject:** Blueline Tilefish  
**To:** "Didden, Jason" <[jdidden@mafmc.org](mailto:jdidden@mafmc.org)>, Rick Robbins <[richardbrobins@gmail.com](mailto:richardbrobins@gmail.com)>  
**Cc:** Rob O'Reilly <[rob.o'reilly@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:rob.o'reilly@mrc.virginia.gov)>, "Cimino, Joe MRC" <[joe.cimino@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:joe.cimino@mrc.virginia.gov)>

I would like to thank the Mid-Atlantic Council for developing a management plan for blueline tilefish. In Virginia, we enacted regulations several years ago to protect this fishery, which was rapidly increasing in popularity, until such time you could get a plan in place.

I have concerns with your management plan as it applies to the recreational sector. It is disappointing that we are being regulated out of another of our wintertime fisheries. Sea bass and blueline tilefish were our main wintertime recreational fisheries after the collapse of our coastal striped bass fishery. They were important fisheries even when we had a strong striped bass fishery in January and February. Someday, we would like our sea bass and our blueline tilefish fisheries back during the wintertime.

Of more immediate concern, is the plan to regulate recreational anglers differently depending on the boat they are on. As planned, in my home inlet in Virginia Beach, I could get on the Evelyn Kennedy and have a 3-fish bag limit or I can get on the Backlash and have a 5-fish bag limit or I can get on the High Hopes and have a 7-fish bag limit. I'm the same angler and the boats are all about the same size. It makes no sense to have different regulations for me depending on the boat that I am on.

I understand what you are trying to do with this sector separation. The charter industry is an important part of the recreational fishing industry. Fisheries managers tend to forget that they are a small part of the industry. This is likely due to the majority of recreational representatives on the various panels being in the charter business. Sector separation invariably punishes those that invest the most into the recreational industry; those that are

buying most of the boats, tackle, electronics, fishing licenses and all of the other things that keep boat builders, tackle manufacturers, bait shops, marinas and the other businesses that rely on recreational anglers to stay in business. We do not want to forget about the goose while focusing on the golden egg. Without the goose, the industry collapses.

I encourage you to pick a bag limit and season which will apply to me no matter which boat I am fishing on. Virginia has never had regulations which discriminate against certain recreational anglers. I am one of the Associate Commissioners of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. When we change our tilefish regulations for 2017, my recommendation to my fellow commissioners will be that we do not start now. If the Council's plan for various bag-limits for different recreational anglers remains, I will suggest that we pick the lowest number to apply to all anglers returning to Virginia regardless of the boat they are on. I hope the Council will decide to treat all recreational anglers the same.

Dr. Ken Neill, III  
IGFA Representative  
President, Peninsula Salt Water Sport Fisherman's Association, Inc.  
Associate Commissioner Virginia Marine Resources Commission  
[www.igfa.org](http://www.igfa.org)  
[www.pswsfa.com](http://www.pswsfa.com)  
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[www.NeillDental.com](http://www.NeillDental.com)  
[www.facebook.com/NeillFamilyAndCosmeticDentalCare](https://www.facebook.com/NeillFamilyAndCosmeticDentalCare)

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**From:** [Moore, Christopher](#)  
**To:** [COUNCIL - Voting](#); [CouncilNonVoting](#); [TechStaff](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: Proposed blueline tilefish regulations  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 08, 2016 10:03:50 AM

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fyi

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**From:** Oswald, David M CIV USARMY TRADOC (US) <david.m.oswald.civ@mail.mil>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 8, 2016 9:52 AM  
**To:** Montanez, Jose; Seagraves, Richard; Moore, Christopher  
**Subject:** Proposed blueline tilefish regulations

Good Morning,

I would like to provide my input in regards to the proposed regulations for Blueline Tilefish.

I really do not understand the rational where a person on a charter boat can keep 7 fish per person,

while a recreational angler can only keep 3 ? Whereas I do not have a boat capable of running to the

tilefish grounds out of Virginia Beach (50 miles +), I do fish on friends recreational boats and share in

the expenses of fishing for the day, which usually runs from \$150-200. It is unjust that I can spend

that amount of money and only keep 3 fish while a person fishing on a headboat spends the same

amount and can keep 7 ! In addition to the trip expense, recreational boaters spend a lot more

money in slip fees, and upkeep and maintenance on their boats. To single out a specific group of

boaters, and penalize them in regards to fish limits, is flat out wrong !!!

What you are proposing will

effectively kill private recreational boats from fishing for Blueline Tilefish !!

David M. Oswald  
Chief, Information Management Office  
Security Assistance Training Field Activity  
757-501-5072

**From:** [Moore, Christopher](#)  
**To:** [COUNCIL - Voting](#); [CouncilNonVoting](#); [TechStaff](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: proposed tile fish regulations  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 08, 2016 10:43:40 AM

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fyi

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**From:** Al Phipps <alehipps@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 8, 2016 10:09 AM  
**To:** Montanez, Jose; Seagraves, Richard; Moore, Christopher  
**Subject:** proposed tile fish regulations

Hello,

I am a recreational fisherman that enjoys offshore fishing on occasion.

Managing the fisheries is important to both recreational and commercial fishermen.

I used to enjoy going to the triangle during the winter months to fish for tautogs knowing that if the tog were not available I could generally catch a mess of seabass to justify the trip.

With the increase regulations on recreational seabass (closed winter season) and reduce tog limits I no longer participate in the fishery. Of note is that a commercial boat can fish for seabass during the closed winter anger season and retain 1000's of pounds of seabass.

With the greatly reduced offshore catches the bottom dropping allows me to turn days with no tuna or mahi into good days with limits of tile fish. Once again the commercial interest will be protected with a limit of 7 per person while the recreational boater like myself and many others will be penalized. Sounds just like the recent changes in cobia.

Flounder is following a similar pattern. The small commercial boats that go jigging for flounder keeping 100's of small fish 16 inches in a day to 'support' their charter fishing interest is destroying the flounder fishing for both commercial and recreational fishing.

All that said it is time to hold the recreation and commercial fishing parties to the same limits.

Thanks,  
Al Phipps  
757 582 6548

# Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Association, Inc (VSSA)

PO Box 28898

Henrico, VA 23228

www.ifishva.org



Mike Avery  
President

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901

Curtis Tomlin  
Vice President

Dear Sir,

June 7, 2016

Kevin Smith  
Treasurer

The Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Association (VSSA) requests the following be included as a public comment for the Blueline Tilefish Listening Session June 9, 2016. We appreciate the opportunity to comment as the decisions made at the April Council meeting were made without public scrutiny and review.

Brent Bosher  
Secretary

**Virginia recreational anglers do not support sector separation.** Separating recreational limits based on what boat your fishing from (Inspected, OUPV, Private) is wrong as each angler is still a recreational angler who should be regulated by a single recreational limit (not by what boat you are fishing from). Separating limits based on boats creates unfair advantages to certain boats which results in angler frustration.

## Board of Directors

John Bello,  
Chairman

**Virginia recreational anglers support 7 Blueline Tilefish per person for all vessels.** We believe your estimation of the level of effort and number of boats targeting blueline tilefish is overstated based on the long distance needed to travel to the fishing grounds. Additionally, with mandatory reporting the Council should have near real time data to manage the quota thus shutting down the season as the ACL is approaching.

Dr. Robert Allen

Mike Avery

Jerry Aycock

Brent Bosher

Jerry Hughes

**Virginia recreational anglers do not support closed seasons.** There is very little left to fish for off the coast of Virginia in winter months and taking away tilefish represents a hardship, particularly on charter boats. If closed seasons are needed, at a minimum blueline tilefish should be reasonably aligned with BSB as they inhabit the same waters. Anglers targeting BSB who catch and release a blueline tilefish likely results in a dead tilefish.

Doug Ochsenknecht

Bob Reed

Mike Ruggles

If you have any questions or comments, the best way to contact us is through our website or email, [ifishva@gmail.com](mailto:ifishva@gmail.com), or my phone: 757-329-5137.

Kevin Smith

Murphy Sprinkle

Sincerely,

Curtis Tomlin

*Mike Avery*

Mike Avery, President