



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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Richard B. Robins, Jr., Chairman | Lee G. Anderson, Vice Chairman
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

January 30, 2015

Ben Hartig
4055 Faber Place Dr.
Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405

Dear Chairman Hartig:

We are deeply concerned that our previously unsuccessful efforts to establish a northern management area in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan have left a regulatory loophole that poses an immediate risk to the blueline tilefish resource in the Mid-Atlantic region. As you are aware, based on the 2006 advice of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, two of our member states—Virginia and Maryland—adopted regulations to ensure the sustainability of their fisheries. Unfortunately, those same fish are now being targeted by a directed longline fishery landing in other Mid-Atlantic states that do not have landing regulations. Headboats from states north of Maryland are also operating without limits on the same population.

The scale of the unregulated commercial landings in the Mid-Atlantic rivals the entire ACL for the species. We believe the situation warrants immediate action to ensure the viability of the blueline tilefish resource in the Mid-Atlantic.

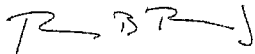
At our December meeting, our Council passed the following motion:

Move that the Council send a letter to Mid-Atlantic and Southern New England states requesting the states adopt consistent incidental commercial trip limits and recreational bag limits for blueline tilefish to prevent the unmanaged expansion of this data-poor fishery.

Letters have been sent to the relevant state directors requesting that they adopt regulations to close this critical regulatory gap. A copy of one of them is attached.

We are committed to working closely with your Council to develop long-term solutions to ensure the sustainability of this fishery in the Mid-Atlantic. We recognize that blueline tilefish is a data-limited stock and look forward to exploring opportunities to advance the state of the science on the species in our region. Meanwhile, we look forward to working with you and our respective NMFS regional offices to explore emergency or interim actions, as appropriate, to control the unmanaged fishery in the Mid-Atlantic.

Sincerely,



Richard B. Robins, Jr.
Chairman

att: Letter to Delaware Director

cc: John Bullard, NMFS
Roy Crabtree, NMFS