

## **POSSIBLE CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR BLUELINE TILEFISH**

The department needs to make changes to the blueline tilefish regulations in response to Amendment 6 to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Tilefish Fishery Management Plan.

Amendment 6 sets commercial and recreational management measures for the blueline tilefish fishery in the Mid-Atlantic. Blueline tilefish (*Caulolatilus microps*) is also known as grey tilefish. Blueline tilefish have been managed for many years under the South Atlantic Council's Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, whose measures only apply south of the Virginia/North Carolina border. The fishery in the Mid-Atlantic was considered very small and remained unregulated until recently. Recreational and commercial blueline tilefish catch has been increasing steadily in the Greater Atlantic Region (Virginia to Maine) since 2011. In 2014, commercial landings increased more than 20-fold from the previous several years' average. This rapid increase in unregulated harvest represented a risk to the long-term sustainability of the stock, and triggered the Mid-Atlantic Council to request emergency management measures in 2015. Interim management measures took effect in June 2016, while the Council developed Amendment 6. Amendment 6 to the Tilefish Fishery Management Plan manages the federal waters blueline tilefish fishery north of the Virginia/North Carolina border, as part of the Tilefish Fishery Management Plan.

### Measures that Apply to Recreational Harvest and Federally Permitted For-Hire Vessels

- The recreational season for blueline tilefish will be May 1 through October 31
- Anglers fishing from private vessels are allowed to keep up to three blueline tilefish per person per trip.
- Anglers fishing from a federally permitted for-hire vessel that has a valid Tilefish Charter/Party Permit, but does not have a current U.S. Coast Guard safety inspection sticker can keep up to five blueline tilefish per person per trip.
- Anglers fishing from a federally permitted for-hire vessel that has both a valid Tilefish Charter/Party Permit and a current U.S. Coast Guard safety inspection sticker can keep up to seven blueline tilefish per person per trip.

### Measures that Apply to Federally Permitted For-Hire Vessels

- Fishing vessels that carry recreational anglers for hire are required to have an open-access tilefish charter/party vessel permit in order to fish for, retain, or land blueline tilefish. This is the same charter/party vessel permit for golden tilefish, so a vessel that has this permit already does not need a separate permit. Vessel owners and operators would be subject to the current requirements to have an operator permit and to maintain and submit vessel trip reports (VTRs) for each fishing trip.

### Measures that Apply to Commercial Harvest

- The harvest limits for tilefish are currently stated in whole pounds and gutted weight. The National Marine Fisheries Service has determined that stating harvest limits in gutted weight is clearer; therefore the harvest limits for blueline tilefish will be stated in gutted weight only. The new limit will be 300 pounds, gutted weight, of blueline tilefish per trip.

- A commercial fishing vessel is required to be issued an open-access tilefish commercial vessel permit in order to retain and land blueline tilefish. This is the same vessel permit required for vessels fishing for golden tilefish. A vessel that has this permit already does not need a separate permit. Vessel owners and operators are subject to the current requirements to have an operator permit and to maintain and submit Vessel Trip Reports (VTRs) for each fishing trip.

#### Measures that Apply to Dealers

- A commercial seafood dealer must have a tilefish dealer permit in order to purchase, possess, or receive blueline tilefish harvested from the Tilefish Management Unit. This is the same dealer permit already in use for dealers of golden tilefish in the region.

Additional Information: Visit the [Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Tilefish webpage](http://www.mafmc.org/tilefish/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) at [http://www.mafmc.org/tilefish/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](http://www.mafmc.org/tilefish/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)