

POSSIBLE CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR GOLDEN TILEFISH

The department needs to update golden tilefish regulations for consistency and compliance with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Golden and Blueline Tilefish Fishery Management Plan.

This plan was previously known as the Tilefish Fishery Management Plan. Updating these regulations will provide consistency between federal and state waters for conservation of these species. The department is implementing regulations for Framework Adjustment 2 to the management plan. This framework makes modest changes to improve and simplify the administration of the golden tilefish fishery. These changes will affect anyone who fishes for golden tilefish in the Mid-Atlantic, including the recreational fishery, the incidental commercial fishery, or the individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishery. The specific measures changing are:

Recreational Changes

- The golden tilefish (*Lopholatilus chamaeleonticeps*) recreational creel limit will be eight per person per trip.
- In order to keep any golden tilefish, anglers must exclusively fish with rod and reel fishing gear. They may use a manual or electric reel.

Commercial Changes

- The commercial golden tilefish landing limit will be 500 pounds or 50 percent, by weight, of all fish, including the golden tilefish, on board the vessel, whichever is less. This limit does not apply to vessels fishing under a tilefish IFQ allocation permit.
- All commercial tilefish must be landed with the head and fins naturally attached but may be gutted.
- Commercial vessels are prohibited from discarding golden tilefish, unless fishing under the incidental catch limit.
- Tilefish may be sold only to persons possessing a valid federal tilefish dealer permit.

General Change

- The department would like to add the ability to adjust possession limits by public notice so that Maryland may implement management measures of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Golden and Blueline Tilefish Fishery Management Plan in a timely manner. The current regulation allows a season to be modified, but not possession limits. Allowing changes by public notice will maintain consistency with federal rules and make it easier for everyone to know the rules. Having differences in state and federal waters can be confusing and could lead to unnecessary enforcement issues. The changes would be published on the department's website at least 48 hours in advance, stating the effective hour and date. The changes will also be distributed using various other sources to reach as many people as possible.