

Frequently Asked Questions for New Regulations for South Atlantic Golden Tilefish



October 2012

What would Amendment 18B to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 18B) do?

Amendment 18B proposes the following management measures that would change the golden tilefish component of the snapper-grouper fishery:

- A commercial golden tilefish endorsement program where a vessel with an Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit may harvest golden tilefish using longline gear only if the vessel also has a golden tilefish endorsement.
- An appeals process for those who feel they were incorrectly excluded from the endorsement program.
- Establishment of a provision to allow the transfer of endorsements to other Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit holders.
- Allocation of commercial annual catch limit to 75% for the longline sector and 25% for the hook-and-line sector.
- Changes to the golden tilefish trip limit to remove the 300 pound gutted weight trip limit when 75% of the ACL is caught.
- Establishment of a 500 pound gutted weight trip limit for those who do not qualify for a golden tilefish endorsement.

What conditions must be met to obtain a golden tilefish longline endorsement?

To qualify for an endorsement, **all** of the following conditions would apply:

- Own a valid or renewable Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit as of the effective date of the final rule implementing Amendment 18B.
- Have history that shows average golden tilefish landings using longline gear of at least 5,000 pounds gutted weight for the best three years within the period 2006 through 2011.

If I qualify for an endorsement, how would I get it?

Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit holders who qualify for a golden tilefish endorsement would receive a letter with the endorsement from NOAA Fisheries permits office.

Would there be an appeals process for those who feel they should be issued an endorsement but did not receive one?

Yes. There would be a period of 90 days to accept appeals to the golden tilefish endorsement program starting on the effective date of the final rule.

What are the basic characteristics of the golden tilefish longline endorsements?

- If the amendment is approved, endorsements would be linked to a qualifying Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit.
- Endorsements would be renewed automatically with the associated Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit.
- Landings of golden tilefish with the longline endorsement would be associated with the Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit, not the endorsement.

Would the longline endorsement be transferable?

Yes, a valid (or renewable) endorsement would be transferable to anyone holding a valid (or renewable) Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit. Although the endorsement would be transferable, any landings made under an endorsement would be associated with the permit.

What would the sector annual catch limit be for golden tilefish?

Amendment 18B would allocate 75% of the annual catch limit to the longline sector and 25% to the hook-and-line sector. The annual catch limit for the longline sector would be 405,971 pounds gutted weight and the annual catch limit for the hook-and-line sector would be 135,324 pounds gutted weight.

How would the golden tilefish trip limit be modified?

If the amendment is approved, the step-down in the trip limit to 300 pounds gutted weight when 75% of the annual catch limit is reached, would be removed.

Would the amendment establish any new trip limits?

Yes, for those who would not qualify for an endorsement, a 500 pound gutted weight trip limit is being proposed. The trip limit for fishermen with a longline endorsement would remain at 4,000 pounds gutted weight.

If approved, when would Amendment 18B be implemented?

The notice of availability seeking comments on Amendment 18B was published in the *Federal Register* on October 26, 2012. Comments on the amendment will be accepted until December 26, 2012. Once the comments on the amendment are reviewed, the Secretary of Commerce will make a

decision to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the amendment. It is anticipated that, if approved, regulations would be effective and implemented in early 2013.

How do I submit a comment?

You may submit comments by either of the following methods. Comments received through other means may not be considered.

Electronic Submissions: Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov

- Enter the following docket number into the “Search” box: **NOAA-NMFS-2012-0177**.
- Select the appropriate title, and click “Submit a Comment.” This will display the comment webform.
- Attachments to electronic comments (up to 10 MB) will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

Mail: Karla Gore, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

Where can I find more information about the amendment?

Contact NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office

By Mail: Southeast Regional Office, c/o Karla Gore

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By FAX: (727) 824-5308

By Phone: (727) 824-5305 Amendment 18B is available on line at: NOAA Fisheries Southeast

Regional Office Web site: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/SASnapperGrouperHomepage.htm>

or, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Web site:

<http://www.safmc.net/Library/SnapperGrouper/tabid/415/Default.aspx>