

Frequently Asked Questions for New Regulations for South Atlantic Golden Tilefish



April 2013

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

The final rule to implement Amendment 18B:

- Establishes 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.
- Establishes an appeals process for those who feel they were incorrectly excluded from the endorsement program.
- Establishes a provision to allow the transfer of endorsements to other Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit holders.
- Allocates 75% of the commercial annual catch limit to the longline sector and 25% to the hook-and-line sector.
- Changes the golden tilefish trip limit to remove the 300 pound gutted weight trip limit when 75% of the ACL is caught.
- Establishes a 500 pound gutted weight trip limit for those who do not qualify for a golden tilefish endorsement.

What are the qualifications to obtain a golden tilefish longline endorsement?

To qualify for an endorsement, **both** of the following conditions must be met:

- Own a valid or renewable Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit as of the effective date of the final rule implementing Amendment 18B.
- Have a 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 will I get it?

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

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

Yes. There is 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 endorsement?

- Endorsements are linked to a qualifying Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit.
- Endorsements are renewed automatically with the associated Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit.
- Landings of golden tilefish with the longline endorsement are associated with the Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit, not the endorsement.

Is the longline endorsement transferable?

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

What is the sector annual catch limit for golden tilefish?

Amendment 18B allocates 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 is 405,971 pounds gutted weight and the annual catch limit for the hook-and-line sector is 135,324 pounds gutted weight.

How is the golden tilefish trip limit modified?

The step-down in the trip limit to 300 pounds gutted weight when 75% of the commercial annual catch limit is reached, has been removed under the final rule.

Did the final rule establish any new trip limits?

Yes, for those fishermen with a South Atlantic Unlimited Permit who do not qualify for an endorsement, there is a 500 pound gutted weight trip limit. The trip limit for fishermen with a longline endorsement remains at 4,000 pounds gutted weight. Fishermen with a South Atlantic 225 Pound Trip Limited Snapper-Grouper Permit cannot harvest more than 225 pounds of snapper-grouper species on a trip.

When will the rule go into effect?

The amendment was approved by the Secretary of Commerce on January 25, 2013, and the final rule was published on April 23, 2013. The final rule becomes effective on May 23, 2013.

Where can I find more information about the amendment?

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- 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>