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**NOAA Announces New Tilefish Catch Share Program in Northeast**  
*Includes Protection for Sensitive Habitat*

The first catch-share program for the tilefish fishery was approved by NOAA's Fisheries Service today, after its adoption was recommended by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

The program, which allots each fisherman a share of the annual tilefish quota, is effective November 1, along with several other measures.

Currently, tilefish are managed by annual overall quotas and trip limits. Under these conditions, fishermen tend to expend more effort than necessary, leading to early annual closures and derby-style fishing – a race to harvest fish before a closure. Under this new tilefish program, each fisherman will be allocated a percentage of the tilefish quota that can be caught throughout the year. A catch-share program like this, based on individual fishing quotas, offers a direct incentive to fishermen to use sustainable practices, because the total allowable catch can be increased as fish populations grow, thus leading to an increase in each fisherman's individual allocation.

The council recommended NOAA approve the catch-share program in an effort to reduce overcapacity in the fishery and improve profitability and working conditions for commercial tilefish fishermen. The council also recommended that four offshore canyons containing exposed clay outcroppings be closed to bottom trawling to protect vulnerable tilefish habitat.

New recreational fishing requirements were also adopted, including a recreational bag limit, and a new charter/party vessel permit that will allow NOAA's Fisheries Service to collect recreational catch information that can improve efforts to assess the health of the tilefish stock.

"Rebuilding our fisheries and preserving the jobs and livelihoods they support are top priorities at NOAA," said Jim Balsiger, NOAA assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service.

"We are pleased to be implementing an catch share," said Pat Kurkul, northeast regional administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "It is important that catch rates be set at sustainable levels and there be strong monitoring programs to ensure that rebuilding of fish stocks continue and we all realize the benefits."

This is the second catch-share program to be implemented in the Northeast. The first was in 1989 for Atlantic surfclams and ocean quahogs.

For more information on this program, log onto: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/hotnews>

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