



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA Fisheries Announces a Final Rule to Modify Management of Seagrasses in Federal Waters of the U.S. Caribbean

On May 23, 2013, NOAA Fisheries approved Amendment 4 to the Fishery Management Plan for Corals and Reef Associated Plants and Invertebrates of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (Coral FMP). Amendment 4 removes seagrass species from the Coral FMP. The final rule implementing this amendment published in the *Federal Register* on **June 4, 2013** (78 FR 33255), with an effective date of July 5, 2013.

This final rule removes seagrass species from federal fisheries management. The Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council) determined that federal management of these species is unnecessary because there is no known harvest of seagrasses, and these species occur predominantly in Puerto Rico commonwealth and U.S. Virgin Islands territorial waters. In addition, seagrasses are designated as essential fish habitat and habitat areas of particular concern in all of the Council fishery management plans, and would continue to be protected by these designations.

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996.

This bulletin provides only a summary of the information regarding the existing regulations. Any discrepancies between this bulletin and the regulations as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.

Electronic copies of the amendment and final rule may be obtained from the NOAA Fisheries Web site:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/caribbean/coral/am4/index.html or the Council Web site: <http://www.caribbeanfmc.com/>.

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