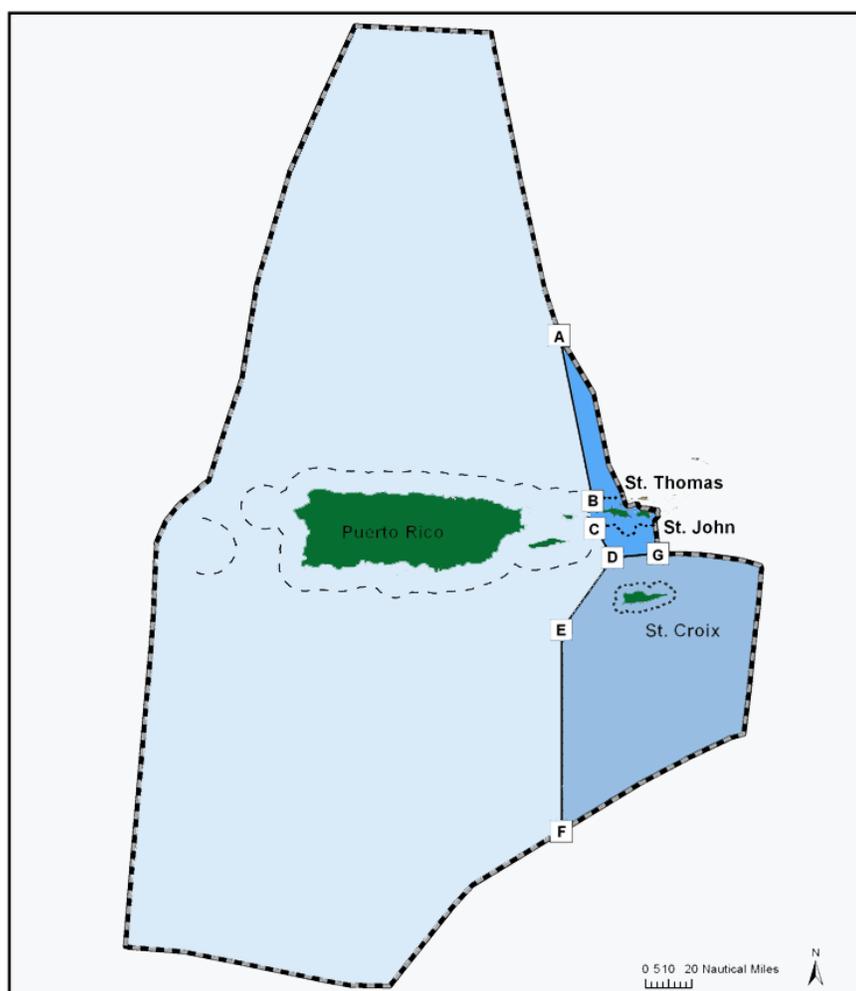




## What is Essential Fish Habitat?

Many of the species of fish and seafood that come to our table, such as groupers, snappers, parrotfish, queen conch and lobster, although they are usually fished in deep waters, spend their juvenile stages in shallow water habitats.



U.S. Caribbean ACL Sub-Divisions

### Sub-Divisions

- Puerto Rico
- St. Croix
- St. Thomas & St. John

- 9 Nautical Mile (Approximate)
- 3 Nautical Mile (Approximate)

- ACL Sub-Divisions
- Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

Created by: NOAA-NMFS-SFD18 Project: Caribbean\_boundaries\_opt123\_v4.mxd Date: May 2011



In the jurisdiction of the Caribbean Fisheries Management Council (CFMC) which includes Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix, **mangroves, seagrass meadows, coral reefs, sand bottoms** and the **water column** are considered *Essential Fish Habitats* for the species in the fisheries.

In these habitats the fish and shellfish that form the fishing resource of our region obtain protection against predators, food from the sediments and spaces for reproduction. To achieve the goal of a sustainable fishery, it is necessary to protect these habitats, for this reason they are important elements in the Fisheries Management Plans developed by the CFMC.



It is important that commercial and recreational fishers, as well as all consumers, know the value of these habitats and avoid negative impacts that may affect them. These includes avoiding discharges of waste water and solid wastes that may reach the water, and be careful not to impact them when navigating, anchoring boats or diving in those areas.

## Essential Fish Habitats

**mangroves**



**seagrass beds**



**sand bottoms**



**shallow water coral reefs**



**deep water coral reefs**



**water column**

