



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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Seasonal Prohibition on Fishing for and Possession of Council Managed Reef Fish in U.S. Caribbean Federal Waters of Bajo de Sico Begins at 12:01 a.m., Local Time, October 1, 2014

NOAA Fisheries reminds fishers that from October 1 through March 31, each year, no person may fish for or possess any Caribbean reef fish, in or from those parts of the Bajo de Sico closed area that are in federal waters. Bajo de Sico is located off the west coast of Puerto Rico. U.S. Caribbean federal waters consist of those waters extending from the nine nautical mile seaward boundary of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the three nautical mile seaward boundary of the territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands out to 200 nautical miles offshore.

The Bajo de Sico closed area is bound by rhumb lines connecting, in order, the following points:

Point	North lat.	West long.
A	18° 15.7'	67° 26.4'
B	18° 15.7'	67° 23.2'
C	18° 12.7'	67° 23.2'
D	18° 12.7'	67° 26.4'
A	18° 15.7'	67° 26.4'

In addition, anchoring or fishing with pots, traps, bottom longlines, gillnets or trammel nets is prohibited within the federal waters of Bajo de Sico year-round. During the closure, however, fishers are allowed to harvest species not managed by the Caribbean Fishery Management Council, including highly migratory species (HMS) or other non-HMS coastal migratory pelagics.

At their August 2014 meeting, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council discussed modifying the closed seasons and closure provisions for Bajo de Sico, Abrir La Sierra Bank, and Tourmaline Bank. These proposed changes are still under development. Therefore, the current regulations for these three areas remain in place. A separate Fishery Bulletin would notify the public if the proposed regulations are approved and when they would become effective.

This action complies with regulations implemented under the Regulatory Amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Fishery of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands modifying the Bajo de Sico seasonal closure. The Caribbean Fishery Management Council, in cooperation with NOAA Fisheries, developed this amendment to provide further protection for red hind spawning aggregations and large snappers and groupers, and to better protect the essential fish habitat where these species reside.

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*.

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