

Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations on E.O. 14276



187th Caribbean Fishery Management Council Meeting

August 12-13, 2025

Embassy Suites, Carolina, Puerto Rico



E.O. 14276

(i) The Secretary of Commerce shall request that each Regional Fishery Management Council, within 180 days of the date of this order, provide the Secretary of Commerce with updates to their recommendations submitted pursuant to Executive Order 13921, to reduce burdens on domestic fishing and to increase production. Building upon the earlier goals, identified actions should stabilize markets, improve access, enhance economic profitability, and prevent closures. The Regional Fishery Management Councils will commit to a work plan and a schedule for implementation to ensure these actions are prioritized.



Section 2.2.2 IBFMs (Selection Criteria):

For those species for which landings data are available (Appendix D in each FMP), the Council would follow a stepwise application of a set of criteria to determine if a species should be included for management. The criteria under consideration include, in order:

Criterion A. Include for management those species that are presently classified as overfished in U.S. Caribbean federal waters based on NMFS determination, or for which historically identified harvest is now prohibited due to their ecological importance as habitat (all corals) or habitat engineers (midnight, blue, rainbow parrotfish), or those species for which seasonal closures or size limits apply (Table 2.2.1).

Criterion B. From the remaining species, i.e., those not included via Criterion A, exclude from federal management those species that have been determined to infrequently occur in federal waters based on expert analysis guided by available data (Table 2.2.2).

Criterion C. From the remaining species, i.e., those not included via Criterion A or excluded via Criterion B, include for management those species that are biologically vulnerable, constrained to a specific habitat that renders them particularly vulnerable, or have an essential ecological value, as determined by expert analysis (Table 2.2.3).

Criterion D. From the remaining species, i.e., those not included via Criteria A and C or excluded via Criterion B, include those species possessing economic importance to the national or regional economy based on a threshold of landings or value separately determined for each of the recreational, commercial, and aquarium trade sectors as appropriate (e.g., top 90%) and those representing an important component of bycatch, as established by expert analysis (Table 2.2.4).

Criterion E. From the remaining species, include any other species that the Council determines are in need of conservation and management (Table 2.2.5).



Table 5.13.3. Annual catch limits for commercial harvest of stocks/stock complexes selected for management in the St. Thomas/St. John FMP. Values are in pounds (lbs) of whole weight. Indicator stocks are marked in bold text. Note that the ACL = optimum yield.

Stock/Stock Complex	Annual Catch Limit (lbs)
Spiny Lobster	209,210
Queen conch	0
Snapper 1 (black, blackfin , silk, vermilion)	20,090
Snapper 2 (queen)	568
Snapper 3 (lane, mutton)	30,784
Snapper 4 (yellowtail)	88,952

St. Thomas Based Fishery Management Plan

Table 5.13.3. Annual catch limits for the commercial sector, recreational sector, and combined total for each stock/stock complex selected for management in the Puerto Rico FMP. Values are in pounds (lbs) of whole weight. Indicator stocks are marked in bold text. Note that the total ACL = optimum yield (OY).

Stock/Stock Complex	Commercial ACL (lbs)	Recreational ACL (lbs)	Total ACL (lbs) (=OY)
Spiny Lobster	NA	NA	527,232
Queen conch	NA	NA	0
Snapper 1 (black, blackfin, silk , vermilion, wenchman)	424,009	111,943	535,951
Snapper 2 (queen , cardinal)	257,236	24,974	282,210
Snapper 3 (lane)	244,376	21,603	265,979
Snapper 4 (mutton , dog, schoolmaster)	116,434	76,625	193,059
Snapper 5 (yellowtail)	315,806	23,988	339,794
Snapper 6 (cubera)	119	6,448	6,567

Puerto Rico Island-Based Fishery Management Plan



Table 5.13.3. Annual catch limits for commercial harvest of stocks/stocks complexes selected for management in the St. Croix FMP. Values are in pounds (lbs) of whole weight (ww). Indicator stocks are marked in bold text. Note that the ACL = optimum yield (OY).

Stock/Stock Complex	Annual Catch Limit (lbs)
Spiny Lobster	197,528
Queen conch	50,000
Snapper 1 (black, blackfin , silk, vermilion)	61,455
Snapper 2 (queen)	7,911
Snapper 3 (lane, gray)	14,156
Snapper 4 (mutton)	8,513
Snapper 5 (schoolmaster)	22,879
Snapper 6 (yellowtail)	15,670

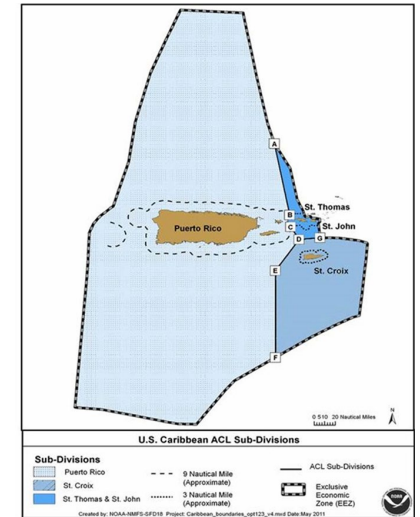
St. Croix Based Fishery Management Plan

Definitions

Productivity – the capacity of the stock to produce maximum sustainable yield and to recover if the population is depleted.

Susceptibility – the potential for the stock to be impacted by the fishery, which includes direct captures, as well as indirect impacts to the fishery (e.g., loss of habitat quality).

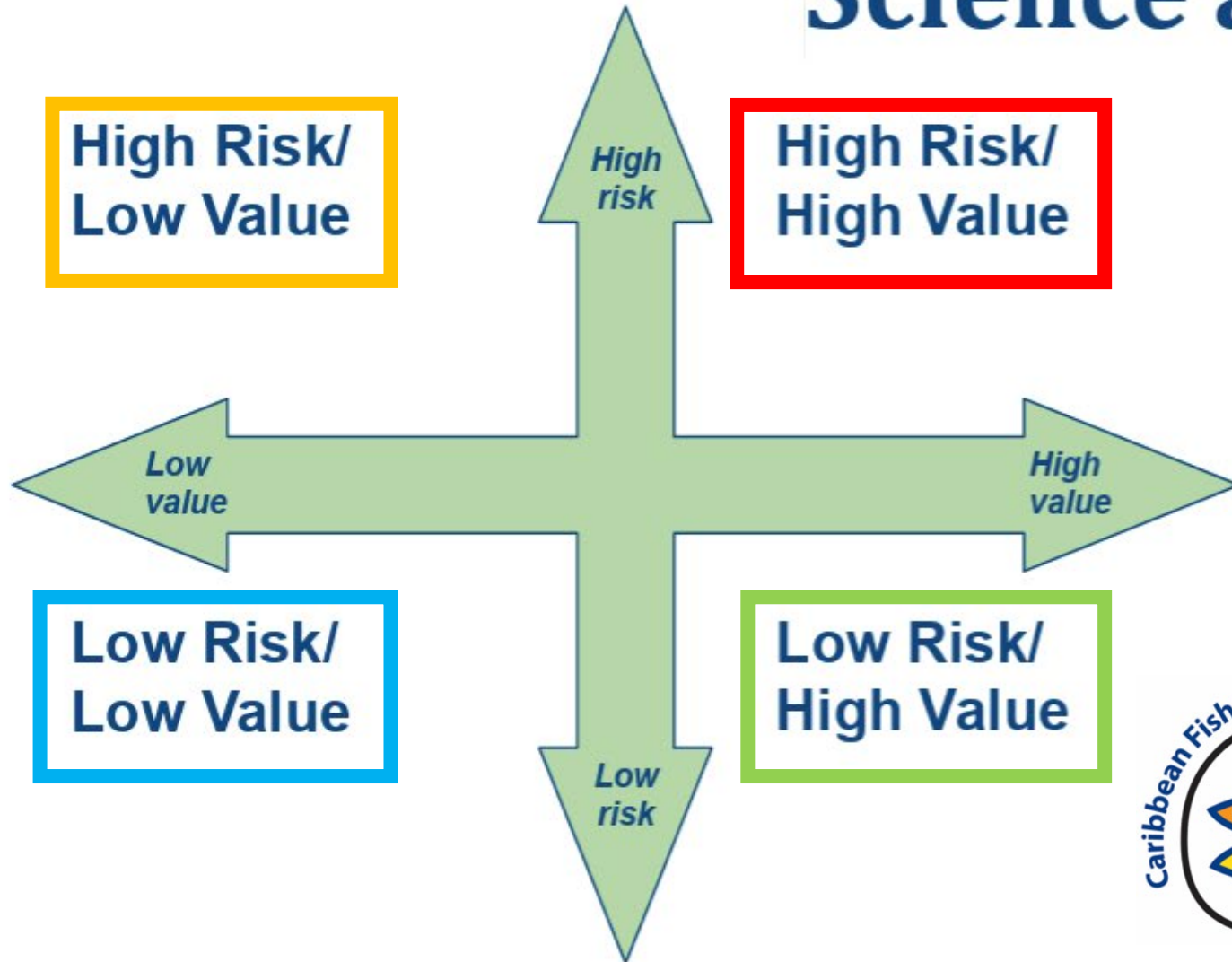
Vulnerability – the combination of a stock’s productivity, which depends upon its life history characteristics, and its susceptibility to the fishery.



Questions addressed by the Ad Hoc Committee:

- Question 1: Is the list of species under management comprehensive and still valid under the criteria used for selection? (Action 2 Sections 2.2., 2.2.1, See Tables 2.2.6, 2.3.2).
- Question 2: Any specific recommendations?
 - Specifically thinking about the EEZ, do these managed species still need management? (Table 5.13.3 of each FMP)
 - Any suggested changes? Please think about the rationale for your recommendation.
- Question 3: Are they critical to management now or not? Should they be kept or removed from management in the EEZ (e.g., ecosystem component species, managed by the states; Table 2.3.4)? WHY?

Prioritization of Stocks/Complexes for Science and Management



Value Categories

- Commercial
- Recreational
- Social

Risk Categories

- Ratio of Catch:ACL
- Biomass/ Rebuilding Status
- Ecosystem Role
- Current / Forecast Ecosystem & Socio-economic conditions



*These proposed categories are revised from SAIP importance factors and may need to be refined.



NOAA
FISHERIES

Status Quo EEZ U.S. Caribbean

High value/ High risk	Reg inplace	Means=	PR	STT/STJ	STX
Nassau Grouper	ESA	No take in EEZ	No take	No take	No take
Goliath Grouper	ACL=0	No take in EEZ	No take	No take	No take
Blue parrotfish	ACL=0	No take in EEZ			
Midnight parrotfish	ACL=0	No take in EEZ			
Rainbow parrotfish	ACL=0	No take in EEZ			
Sea cucumbers	ACL=0	No take in EEZ	No take		
Sea urchins	ACL=0	No take in EEZ	No take		
Corals	ESA; ACL=0	No take in EEZ	No take	No take	No take

State Waters

Status Quo EEZ PR

Giant manta ray	ESA; ACL=0	No take in EEZ
Spotted eagle ray	ACL=0	No take in EEZ
Southern stingray	ACL=0	No take in EEZ

Puerto Rico EEZ – Managed Species

Ad Hoc	High risk/High value	Low risk/ High value	High risk/ Low value	Low risk/ Low value
	Nassau Grouper	queen snapper	princess parrotfish	Cubera
	Goliath Grouper	cardinal snapper	queen parrotfish	queen triggerfish
	Blue parrotfish	lane snapper	redtail parrotfish	ocean triggerfish
	Midnight parrotfish	mutton snapper	stoplight parrotfish	gray triggerfish
	Rainbow parrotfish	yellowtail snapper	redband parrotfish	
	Sea cucumbers	hogfish	striped parrotfish	
	Sea urchins	rainbow runner		
	Corals	dolphinfish		
	giant manta ray	pompano dolphin		
	spotted eagle ray	little tuny		
	southern stingray	blackfin tuna		
		cero mackerel		
		king mackerel		
		wahoo		
		Lobster		
		Queen Conch		
PRDNER	High risk/High value	Low risk/ High value	High risk/ Low value	Low risk/ Low value
	Conch	dolphinfish	coney	Blackfin tuna
	Mutton snapper	hogfish	parrotfish	King mackerel
	Queen snapper	lane snapper		Little tunny
	silk snapper	lobster		other snappers
	red hind	yellowtail snapper		queen triggerfish

Proposed Species to be Removed from Federal Management

Puerto Rico	Why?
cardinal snapper	Bycatch, not abundant
dog snapper	State waters; not harvested from EEZ
schoolmaster snapper	State waters; not harvested from EEZ
coney grouper	Not common in EEZ
graysby grouper	Not common in EEZ
rockhind grouper	Not good for market; not common
white grunt	Harvested in State waters
blue tang	No fishery; State waters
ocean surgeonfish	No fishery; State waters
doctorfish	No fishery; State waters
hogfish	Harvested in State waters
puddingwife	Harvested in State waters
Spanish hogfish	Harvested in State waters
queen angelfish	No fishery; ecosystem
gray angelfish	No fishery
French angelfish	No fishery
great barracuda	Sale prohibited; recreational but released; ciguatoxic
Tripletail	Not common; good market
crevalle jack	
african pompano	State waters; not harvested from EEZ

Proposed Species to be Removed from Federal Management

Puerto Rico	Why?	St. Thomas/St. John	Why?	St. Croix	Why?
black grouper	State Waters	black grouper	Mostly Territorial; Vulnerable when aggregating	black grouper	Mostly Territorial; Vulnerable when aggregating
red grouper	State Waters	red grouper		red grouper	
tiger grouper	State Waters	tiger grouper		tiger grouper	
yellowfin grouper	State Waters				
yellowmouth grouper	State Waters	yellowmouth grouper	not common; low price		
misty grouper	Bycatch to DWS; occasional			misty grouper	Mostly territorial
yellowedge grouper	State Waters	yellowedge grouper	not common; low price		

St. Thomas / St. John EEZ

Low risk/ High value	High risk/ Low value	Low risk/ Low value
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black snapper
blackfin snapper
silk snapper
vermilion snapper
queen snapper
mutton snapper
yellowtail snapper
coney
red hind
yellowfin grouper
princess parrotfish
queen parrotfish
redtail parrotfish
stoplight parrotfish
redband parrotfish
striped parrotfish
redfin parrotfish
queen triggerfish
hogfish
dolphinfish
wahoo
Lobster
Queen Conch

St. Croix EEZ

Low risk/ High value	High risk/ Low value	Low risk/ Low value
black snapper		yellowfin grouper
blackfin snapper		white grunt (many released)
silk snapper		bluestriped grunt (many released)
vermilion snapper		blue tang
queen snapper		ocean surgeonfish
lane snapper		doctorfish
mutton snapper		
schoolmaster		
yellowtail snapper		
coney grouper		
graysby grouper		
red hind grouper		
rockhind grouper		
princess parrotfish		
queen parrotfish		
redtail parrotfish		
stoplight parrotfish		
redband parrotfish		
striped parrotfish		
redfin parrotfish		
queen triggerfis		
Squirrelfish (longspine)		
queen angelfish		
gray angelfish		
French angelfish		
dolphinfish		
Lobster		

New Categories of risk and value

PR

STX

STT

STX

STT

Medium risk/High value

Medium risk/High value

Medium risk/Low value

Low risk/Medium value

Low risk/Medium value

queen snapper
dolphinfish
hogfish

Queen Conch

Queen Conch

queen angelfish
gray angelfish
French angelfish
blue runner jack
misty grouper

gray snapper

lane snapper
white grunt (top 10)
bluestriped grunt
margate grunt
blue tang
ocean surgeonfish
doctorfish
jolthead porgie
saucereye porgie
sheepshead porgie
sea bream

Additional Comments:

- Keep some of the protected areas in place, but no more MPAs
 - Open Tourmaline to all fishing- no evidence of aggregations or red hind (water column and bottom fishing)
 - Hind Bank and Grammanik in place
- Monuments serve as source of recruits for the fishery in the USVI
- ACLs vs seasonal closures: need to be reviewed; overprotection
- Revise the catch reports- focus on the main fisheries such as trap fishery in St. Thomas; Deep-water snappers in Puerto Rico
- Market driven fisheries that need to be assessed as such.
- Need to look at the variability in prices (PR) due to economic changes and imports

Council(s)	Priority Number	Action type (e.g. Changes to Regulations, Orders, Guidance Documents, Other Similar Agency Actions)	Relevant CFR Citation under Title 50 (if applicable)	Updated description of recommended action(s)	Rationale of how the recommended action(s) stabilize markets, improve access, enhance economic profitability, and prevent closures	Proposed plan and schedule for implementation
Example - XFMC	1	Regulation	50 CFR 622	This regulation would modify provisions for Fish A vessels transiting through cold weather closed areas with Fish A on board in federal waters. The proposed action would allow trawl doors in the rack (cradle), nets in the rigging and tied down, and trawl net on the deck during transit. Currently, Fish A vessels transiting cold weather closed areas with Fish A on board are required to stow a trawl net with a mesh size of less than 4 inches below deck. Fishermen have requested a change to these transit provisions as vessel design changes have limited access to below deck storage, the need to disassemble the trawl gear prior to stowing nets below deck in rough conditions is a safety at sea concern, and some fishermen have avoided transiting the closed areas entirely.	Because of safety at sea concerns caused by shoals in state waters off State B, federally permitted Fish A vessels from states north of State B that operate off of State B during cold weather closures, but have been unable to store fishing gear according to the current transit regulations, have been forced to land their catch in State B rather than at their homeport. The proposed changes would make it easier for these vessels to comply with the gear stowage requirements and, as a result, more easily return to their homeport with Fish A on board, thus improving access.	Rulemaking requested by X Council at June meeting. Proposed rule anticipated to publish by (timeline if known).

