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Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Requirements for Classification and Management of Stocks

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Background

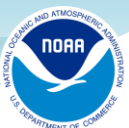
- **April 2025 Council meeting:** SERO staff will review stocks managed under each fishery management plan (FMP) and prepare a summary matrix to help inform decisions about:
 - which stocks should remain managed;
 - which stocks could be moved to Ecosystem Component species; and
 - which stocks could be removed from federal management.
- Aligns with recent discussion during the Council's Ad Hoc Committee meeting.

NS Guidelines for Conservation and Management

- In 2016, NMFS revised the National Standard (NS) guidelines to help clarify which stocks require conservation and management (81 FR 71858).
- NMFS clarified that not every fishery requires management. However, stocks that are **predominately caught in federal waters and are overfished/subject to overfishing**, or likely to become overfished/subject to overfishing would require conservation and management.

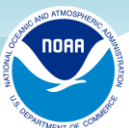
NS Factors for Councils to Consider

1. The stock is an important component of the marine environment.
2. The stock is caught by the fishery.
3. Whether an FMP can improve or maintain the condition of the stock.
4. The stock is a target of a fishery.
5. The stock is important to commercial, recreational, or subsistence users.
6. The fishery is important to the Nation or to the regional economy.
7. The need to resolve competing interests and conflicts among user groups and whether an FMP can further that resolution.
8. The economic condition of a fishery and whether an FMP can produce more efficient utilization.
9. The needs of a developing fishery, and whether an FMP can foster orderly growth.
10. The extent to which the fishery is already adequately managed by states, by state/federal programs, or by federal regulations pursuant to other FMPs or international commissions, or by industry self-regulation, consistent with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable law.



Island-based Fishery Management Plans

- An objective of the Puerto Rico, St. Thomas/St. John, and St. Croix FMPs was to update federal management to better represent the individual island areas - including economically and ecologically important species occurring in federal waters.
- During development of the FMPs, the Council and NMFS considered the 10 NS factors to determine which species should be included in each FMP.



Selection Criteria used by the Council in the FMPs

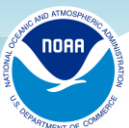
Criterion A. *Include* species classified as overfished in federal waters, or for which harvest is prohibited due to their ecological importance as habitat (corals) or habitat engineers (midnight, blue, rainbow parrotfish), or those with seasonal closures or size limits.

Criterion B. From those remaining, *exclude* species that infrequently occur in federal waters based on expert analysis and available data.

Criterion C. From those remaining, *include* species that are biologically vulnerable, constrained to a habitat that makes them vulnerable, or have essential ecological value, based on expert analysis.

Criterion D. From those remaining, *include* species important to the national/regional economy for the recreational, commercial, and aquarium trade sectors as appropriate (e.g., top 90% of landings) and those that are an important component of bycatch, based on expert analysis.

Criterion E. From those remaining, *include* any other species that the Council determines are in need of conservation and management.



FMP	Criterion A	Criterion C	Criterion D	Criterion E
Puerto Rico	Snappers: black, blackfin, silk, vermilion, lane, mutton, yellowtail Groupers: Nassau, goliath, red hind, black, red, tiger, yellowfin, yellowedge Parrotfish: blue, midnight, rainbow Queen Conch Spiny Lobster Corals <p style="text-align: right;">n = 20 + corals</p>	Snappers: dog, schoolmaster, cubera Groupers: coney, graysby, rock hind, misty, yellowmouth Parrotfish: queen, princess, redband, stoplight, redband, striped Surgeonfish: blue tang, ocean, doctorfish Triggerfish: ocean, queen, gray Wrasses: hogfish, puddingwife, Spanish hogfish Angelfish: queen, gray, French Great barracuda Tripletail Rays: giant manta, spotted eagle, southern stingray <p style="text-align: right;">n = 31</p>	Snappers: wenchman, cardinal, queen White grunt Jacks - crevalle, African pompano, rainbow runner Wahoo Dolphinfish - dolphin, pompano Tunas - little tunny, blackfin Mackerels - king, cero <p style="text-align: right;">n = 14</p>	Sea cucumbers Sea urchins
St. Croix	Snappers: black, blackfin, silk, vermilion, lane, mutton, yellowtail Groupers: Nassau, goliath, red hind, black, red, tiger, yellowfin Parrotfish: blue, midnight, rainbow, queen, princess, redfin, redband, striped, stoplight Queen Conch Spiny Lobster Corals <p style="text-align: right;">n = 26 + corals</p>	Groupers: coney, graysby, rock hind, misty Bluestriped grunt Longspine squirrelfish Surgeonfish: blue tang, ocean, doctorfish Angelfish: queen, gray, French <p style="text-align: right;">n = 12</p>	Snappers: queen, gray, schoolmaster White grunt Queen triggerfish Dolphin Wahoo <p style="text-align: right;">n = 7</p>	Sea cucumbers Sea urchins
St. Thomas/ St. John	Snappers: black, blackfin, silk, vermilion, lane, mutton, yellowtail Groupers: Nassau, goliath, red hind, black, red, tiger, yellowfin, yellowedge Parrotfish: blue, midnight, rainbow Queen Conch Spiny Lobster Corals <p style="text-align: right;">n = 20 + corals</p>	Groupers: coney, misty, yellowmouth Parrotfish: queen, princess, redband, striped, redfin Grunts: white, margate, bluestriped Porgies: jolthead, sea bream, sheepshead, saucereye Surgeonfish: blue tang, ocean, doctorfish Angelfish: queen, gray, French Hogfish <p style="text-align: right;">n = 24</p>	Queen snapper Blue runner Queen triggerfish Dolphin Wahoo <p style="text-align: right;">n = 5</p>	Sea cucumbers Sea urchins

Current Monitoring Issues

- The overfishing limit proxy (sustainable yield level) was not set for select species.
- Some of the managed species are not present on the current commercial catch report (CCR) forms.
- Some species were not on the CCR forms during the reference period used to set annual catch limits (ACLs).
- For those species that are on the CCR forms and for which the catch location is reported (e.g., territorial or federal waters), the majority of catch for several species occurs in territorial waters (Puerto Rico = 9 nautical miles from shore; USVI = 3 nautical miles from shore).
- Data availability challenges continue, most notably that recreational data is not available to compare to the recreational ACLs established for Puerto Rico species.

Reviewing Stocks for Management Need

- Councils should periodically review their FMPs and the best scientific information available and determine if the stocks are appropriately identified. Stocks could be reclassified or removed from a FMP through an amendment that documents the rationale for the decision(s).
- Councils should prepare an analysis of the NS factors and any additional considerations relevant to the stock. NS guidelines recommend the following weighting of the factors:
 - Factors 1-3 should be considered first for including a stock, as they address maintaining a fishery resource and the marine environment.
 - Factors 4-9 should be considered next for including a stock, as they set forth key economic, social, and other reasons contained within the MSA for an FMP action.
 - Finally, factor 10 should be considered for not including a stock. Adequate management of a fishery by states, state/federal programs, or another federal FMP would weigh in favor of removing a stock from an FMP.



Ecosystem Component Species

- Councils may choose to identify stocks within their FMPs as ecosystem component (EC) species.
- EC species are stocks that a Council determines do not require conservation and management, but are included in an FMP to achieve ecosystem objectives.
- EC species do not require ACLs, other reference points, or accountability measures.
- EC species may be identified at the stock level and may be grouped into complexes.
- Consistent with NS 9 (minimize bycatch), management measures can be adopted for the EC species to: collect data, minimize bycatch or bycatch mortality, protect the associated role of the species in the ecosystem, and/or address other ecosystem issues.

Species Matrix



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Species Matrix - Objectives

- Summarize qualitative and quantitative information for each managed stock that can be used by the Council to determine if conservation and management is required.
 - Focus on those that are targeted by the fishery in federal waters;
 - Consider those for which resources/data are available to manage effectively; and
 - Consider which species could be classified as EC species.
- Provides a framework for the Council to modify and improve upon the criteria used in the FMPs for determining which species are in need of conservation and management.



Species Matrix - Variables

Qualitative	Quantitative
FMP selection criterion (A, C, D, E)	Number of years the species was reported in the commercial landings during historical (2012-2023) and recent (2021-2023) periods.
Indicator stock for the complex (Y/N)	Average commercial landings for the species during historical (2012-2023) and recent (2021-2023) periods.
ABC Control Rule Tier (3, 4a, 4b)	Percent of the commercial landings reported from federal waters for each species during historical (2012-2023) and recent (2021-2023) periods.
Species listed on the current commercial catch report form (Y/N)	Rank of each species in commercial landings during historical (2012-2023) and recent (2021-2023) periods.
ESA-listed species and if 4d rule in place (Y/N)	Comparison of the commercial landings in recent years (2019-2023) to the historical period (2012-2023).
List of federal/territorial regulations applicable to the species (e.g., size limit, seasonal closure)	For Puerto Rico only, the number of years the species was reported in the recreational landings, average recreational landings per species, and rank of each species for years 2000-2016.
Stock status (overfished/overfishing)	Productivity and Susceptibility scores assigned by SSC included in FMPs
Critical role in ecosystem (e.g., grazer) or fishery (e.g., bait)	Pending - TIP data/NCRMP trend/Price per pound
Years that ACLs or OFL/OFL proxy were exceeded	
Species on the SEDAR stock assessment schedule (year)	

An Example of How the Species Matrix Could Be Used

Update the Selection Criteria for Retaining Stocks

- 1 - Stocks that are predominantly caught in federal waters and are overfished or experiencing overfishing must stay in the FMP.
- 2 - (aligns with NS factors 3 and 4) - use the commercial landings from 2012-2023 and recreational landings (Puerto Rico only) from 2000-2016 to determine if the stock is targeted by the fishery(ies).
 - if $\geq 25\%$ of the commercial and recreational landings are reported from federal waters.
 - if species is present in $\geq 75\%$ of the years in the commercial ($n \geq 9$) and recreational ($n \geq 13$) landings.
 - if average commercial landings is $\geq 7,500$ pounds and average recreational landings is $\geq 10,000$ pounds for the species.

Numbers in green are examples and could be changed based on Council/Advisory input and developed as options by the interdisciplinary planning team (IPT).

How the Species Matrix could be used - Continued

- 3 (aligns with NS factor 5) - use the commercial landings from 2012-2023 and recreational landings (Puerto Rico only) from 2000-2016 to determine if the stock is important to the fishers - i.e., species rank.
 - if the species rank is >0.5% of the total commercial catch (for Puerto Rico - top 29; for St. Croix - top 34; for St. Thomas/St. John - top 31) and >0.5% of the total recreational catch (for Puerto Rico - top 21).
- 4 (aligns with NS factor 6) – use average price data available for each species
 - TBD

Numbers in green are examples and could be changed based on Council/Advisory input and developed as options by the IPT.

Using the Matrix - Example Results Steps 1-3

Step	Puerto Rico Species	St. Croix Species	St. Thomas/St. John Species
1 (overfished)	Spiny lobster, Queen conch, Nassau grouper, Goliath grouper	Queen conch, Nassau grouper, Goliath grouper	Queen conch, Nassau grouper, Goliath grouper
2 (target of federal fishery)	Dolphin, Wahoo Snappers: blackfin, silk , cardinal, queen <i>Tripletail, blackfin tuna, wahoo</i>	Spiny lobster Dolphin, Wahoo Parrotfish: queen, redfin, redtail, stoplight, redband Snappers: blackfin, silk Triggerfish: queen	Spiny lobster Triggerfish: queen Angelfish: gray Grunts: white Groupers: red hind Snappers: yellowtail Surgeonfish: doctorfish
3 (important to fishers)	Queen conch, Spiny lobster Dolphin, Wahoo, Hogfish Groupers: red hind Snappers: mutton, silk , lane, yellowtail, queen Triggerfish: queen Tunas: little tunny, blackfin tuna Mackerels: king, cero <i>Great barracuda, crevalle jack, tripletail</i>	Queen conch, Spiny lobster Dolphin, Wahoo Angelfish: gray, French Groupers: coney, red hind Grunts: bluestriped, white Parrotfish: princess, queen, redfin, redtail, stoplight, redband Snappers: blackfin, silk , gray, mutton, yellowtail, queen, schoolmaster Surgeonfish: blue tang, ocean, doctorfish Triggerfish: queen	Spiny lobster , Dolphin, Wahoo, Hogfish Angelfish: gray , French Grunts: white , bluestriped Groupers: coney, red hind Jacks: blue runner Parrotfish: redtail, stoplight Porgies: saucereye Snappers: blackfin, silk, mutton, yellowtail Surgeonfish: blue tang, doctorfish Triggerfish: queen

Bold species occur in both analyses and *italicized* species are from analysis of recreational landings.



Example Summary - Puerto Rico Stocks

Could Retain	Could Consider Removing/Moving to ECs
<p>Spiny lobster, Queen conch Dolphin, Wahoo Hogfish Snappers: blackfin, silk, cardinal, queen, mutton, lane, yellowtail Groupers: Nassau, goliath, red hind Mackerel: king, cero Triggerfish: queen Tunas: little tunny, blackfin tuna</p> <p><i>Great barracuda, crevalle jack, tripletail</i></p>	<p>Angelfish: queen, gray, French Groupers: black, yellowmouth, graysby, rock hind, coney, red, tiger, yellowfin, misty, yellowedge White grunt Jacks: African pompano, rainbow runner Parrotfish: blue, midnight, rainbow, queen, stoplight, redband, striped, princess, redtail Snappers: black, vermilion, dog, schoolmaster, wenchman, cubera Surgeonfish: doctorfish, blue tang, ocean Triggerfish: ocean, gray Wrasses: puddingwife, Spanish hogfish Rays: giant manta, spotted eagle, southern stingray Pompano dolphinfish Corals, sea cucumbers, sea urchins</p> <p>Great barracuda, crevalle jack, tripletail</p>

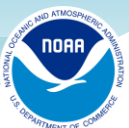
Italicized species are from analysis of recreational landings.

Example Summary - St. Croix Stocks

Could Retain	Could Consider Removing/Moving to ECs
<p>Spiny lobster, Queen conch Dolphin, Wahoo Angelfish: gray, French Groupers: Nassau, goliath, coney, red hind Grunts: bluestriped, white Parrotfish: queen, redfin, redtail, stoplight, redband, princess Snappers: blackfin, silk, gray, mutton, yellowtail, queen, schoolmaster Surgeonfish: blue tang, ocean, doctorfish Queen triggerfish</p>	<p>Angelfish: queen Groupers: graysby, rock hind, black, red, tiger, yellowfin, misty Parrotfish: blue, midnight, rainbow, striped Snappers: black, lane, vermilion Longspine squirrelfish Corals, sea cucumbers, sea urchins</p>

Example Summary - St. Thomas/St. John Stocks

Could Retain	Could Consider Removing/Moving to ECs
<p>Spiny lobster, Queen conch Dolphin, Wahoo Hogfish Angelfish: gray, French Grunts: white, bluestriped Groupers: Nassau, goliath, red hind, coney Blue runner Parrotfish: redtail, stoplight Porgies: saucereye Snappers: yellowtail, blackfin, silk, mutton Surgeonfish: doctorfish, blue tang Queen triggerfish</p>	<p>Angelfish: queen Grunts: margate Groupers: black, tiger, red, yellowfin, yellowmouth, yellowedge, misty Porgies: jolthead, sea bream, sheepshead Parrotfish: blue, midnight, rainbow, princess, queen, redband, striped, redfin Snappers: black, queen, vermilion, lane Surgeonfish: ocean Corals, sea cucumbers, sea urchins</p>



Discussion and Next Steps

- Do the species selection criteria in the FMPs need to updated?
 - If yes, why?
- Based on the matrix:
 - Are there other criteria (qualitative or quantitative) you'd like considered?
 - Are there other thresholds you'd like the IPT to consider?
 - For species that don't meet criteria for retention, what criteria would be used for removal vs. classification as an EC species?
- Council tasks staff to develop an options paper to modify managed stocks and update ACLs (review in December).
 - Staff reviews options paper with advisory groups after December meeting.



Questions