



Caribbean Fishery Management Council's Report



October 2015

153rd REGULAR MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

August 19 -20 - Mayagüez Holiday Inn & Casino, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico

Council News:

Dr. Roy Crabtree, NMFS/Southeast Regional Office swore in Mr. Carlos Velázquez, commercial fisher from Puerto Rico as new Council Member. Mr. Velazquez is the President of the Naguabo Fishers Association in the eastern coast of Puerto Rico. He has been a member of the AP (since 2013) and of the newly formed Puerto Rico DAP before becoming a Council member.

Mr. Carlos Farchette (USVI) was nominated and re-elected as Chairperson for the new term.

Mr. Marcos Hanke (Puerto Rico) was appointed as Vice Chair.



Island Based FMPs:

The DAPs of Puerto Rico, St. Thomas/St. John, and St. Croix were asked to review the list of species that are being proposed for inclusion in federal management for each of the Island Based Fishery Management Plans (PR, STT/STJ,STX).

The tentative list was prepared by the Ad Hoc Panel of Experts that was charged to use the best available scientific data to develop this list of species.

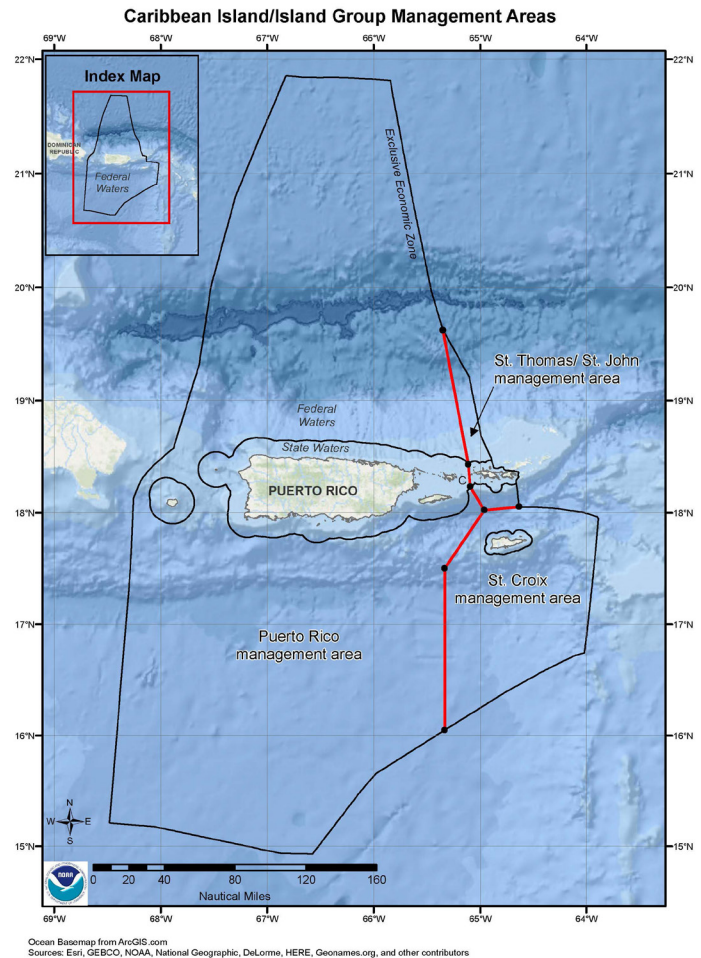
The next steps will be for the DAPs to meet on 2016 to finish the grouping of the species.

For Puerto Rico, the DAP recommendation to include the redfin parrotfish was not accepted. For St. Croix, the DAP-STX recommendation to include the yellowedge grouper as an ecosystem component species was accepted. To be considered as an ecosystem component species, the species should:

- Be a non-target species or nontarget stock;
- Not be determined to be subject to overfishing, approaching overfished, or overfished;
- Not be likely to become subject to overfishing or overfished, according to the best available information, in the absence of conservation and management measures; and
- Not generally be retained for sale or personal use. Occasional retention of the species would not, in and of itself, preclude consideration of the species under the EC classification.

The IBFMPs will include all corals (soft, hard, mesophotic and deepwater corals), all species of barracuda, sea cucumbers and sea urchins, present in the US Caribbean EEZ.

Other issues such as: species complexes and reference points will be considered in the next Regular Meeting in December, 2015.



Ocean Basemap from ArcGIS.com
Sources: Esri, GEBCO, NOAA, National Geographic, DeLorme, HERE, Geonames.org, and other contributors

Over 300 stakeholders: fishers, restaurant and fish market owners, fishers’ relatives and even the Mayor of Cabo Rojo attended the public hearing on the issue of the revisions of the management regulations in the Federal portions of Abrir la Sierra, Bajo de Sico and Tourmaline fishing sites. Compatibility issues had been under discussion by the Council and numerous public participation meetings had taken place in the last two years.

The Council listened to the arguments presented by stakeholders and, during the regular meeting decided not to proceed with the proposed amendments to the ABT regulations. The current regulations for ABT are shown in the following Table.

Management Measures	Bajo de Sico	Tourmaline Bank	Abrir La Sierra Bank
Closure Months	October 1 – March 31, each year	December 1 – February 28, each year	December 1 – February 28, each year
Managed Fishing Activities	No fishing for or possession of Caribbean reef fish managed by the Council ¹ in or from federal waters of Bajo de Sico during closure ²	No fishing for any species during closure	No fishing for any species during closure
	Fishing with pots, traps, bottom longlines, gillnets or trammel nets is prohibited year-round within the federal waters of Bajo de Sico, Tourmaline Bank and Abrir La Sierra Bank.		
Anchoring	No anchoring year-round	Anchoring allowed year-round using only an anchor retrieval system that recovers the anchor by its crown	Anchoring allowed year-round using only an anchor retrieval system that recovers the anchor by its crown

¹For a complete list of Council-managed reef fish, please see Table 2 of Appendix A to Part 622--Caribbean Reef Fish in federal regulations at 50 CFR Part 622.

²During the Bajo de Sico seasonal area closure, fishers are allowed to harvest spiny lobster and species not managed by the Caribbean Fishery Management Council, including highly migratory species (HMS) or other non-HMS coastal migratory pelagics.

Further initiatives will continue with the DNER with the objective of making regulations compatible between DNER and the Federal jurisdiction. For more information, a detailed account of the Public Hearing appears in the CFMC Report ABT available at www.caribbeanfmc.com



Update on the Accountability Measures-Based Closures Amendment:

Ms, Kate Quigley, CFMC's Fisheries Economist, has been conducting a very fruitful dialogue with fishers within the US Caribbean Federal jurisdiction on the issue of how the implementation of AM triggered closures affect the socioeconomic condition of fishers. This effort is in response to fishers' claims that the timing of those closures, which occur late in the year and coincide with high tourism seasons or cultural holidays where fish and seafood is more highly priced, affects their income from the resource.

As a result, the Council is developing different options to modify the Accountability Measure (AM) triggered closures, in such a way that the timing of the closures does not take place during those economically and culturally important dates identified by the fishers, and therefore have less of an impact on fisher incomes.

After an intense discussion of each one of the Actions and Alternatives presented by Ms. Quigley, the Council approved to conduct Public Hearings in PR, STT/STJ and STX in late 2015. In these public hearings, the Council will present alternative closure dates to the stakeholders and the possibility of revising timing of the closures every 2 or 5 years after implementation.



Outreach and Education:

Dr. Graciela García Moliner, CFMC Habitat and FMPs Specialist, was invited to provide orientation to a group of nineteen (19) DNER Rangers on Fish Identification and the Regulations to be applied during field interventions. The Workshop was held at JBNEER and pertinent literature from CFMC library was made available for the participants. Rangers find the CFMC Fishing Regulations App very useful.



In another activity, Dr. García Moliner addressed a group of Marine Biology undergraduate students at the University of Puerto Rico, Humacao Campus on The importance of fisheries in Puerto Rico: Biology and Laws. She lectured on issues such as: fisheries species, species and population biology and the relationship between management measures and biology. The need for professionals in fisheries science was also addressed, as well as the need for citizen's awareness of the importance of sustainable fisheries practices.

Sargassum...everywhere

Floating Sargassum has been arriving to the shores throughout the region. It has been classified as a nuisance for tourism and other activities, such as coastal navigation in Puerto Rico and the USVI. In relation to fisheries, it seems that, in waters farther from the coast, snappers are moving away from the floating Sargassum. It may also have impact on aquarium fishes. The question of its possible impact on water quality was brought up to the SSC.



Forage species

These species are of interest mostly in state waters and used as bait fish in the EEZ. However, they play a very important role as forage species in the marine ecosystem. Forage species are small fish and invertebrates that are low on the food chain. They feed on smaller marine organisms such as plankton and are in turn eaten by many species of fish, sea birds, and marine mammals. Some forage species form dense aggregations and many have highly variable abundances over time. Forage species play an important role in sustaining the productivity and structure of marine ecosystems by facilitating the transfer of energy from the lowest levels of the food chain to higher levels. Taking into account the ecological importance of forage fishes, the CFMC considers that caution should be taken, but not necessarily manage them. A recommendation to get public opinion on this issue was presented at this Meeting.



Acronyms

ABT - Abrir la Sierra, Bajo de Sico and Tourmaline
ACL - Annual Catch Limit
AM - Accountability Measure
CFMC - Caribbean Fishery Management Council
DNER - Department of Natural and Environmental Resources
EEZ - Exclusive Economic Zone
FMP - Fishery Management Plans
FMU - Fishery Management Unit
MSA – Magnuson Steven Act
NMFS - National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PR - Puerto Rico
SSC - Scientific and Statistical Committee
USVI - United States Virgin Islands

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Special thanks to the Council staff members who helped with the review of the newsletter.

Editor's Note

The Caribbean Newsletter is published by The Caribbean Fishery Management Council. Its purpose is to report developments in fisheries management that would be of interest to its readers. Please credit the council when reprinting articles used in this newsletter. Anyone wishing to submit information or articles pertaining to fishing or fisheries management, or letters to the editor on a pertinent issue, is invited and encouraged to do so. These may be mailed to Natalia Perdomo, Caribbean Newsletter, 270 Muñoz Rivera Avenue Suite 401 San Juan Puerto Rico, 00918, or may be sent via internet to this email address nataliaperdomo_cfmc@yahoo.com.