

**CARIBBEAN FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
268 MUNOZ RIVERA AVENUE, SUITE 1108
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO 00918**

**SCOPING MEETINGS BAJO DE SICO
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS**

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council held scoping meetings to obtain public comments on the following management alternatives:

Alternative 1: No Action - do not extend the seasonal closure of Bajo de Sico.

Alternative 2: Extend closure of Bajo de Sico from 3 months to 6 months in order to provide better protection for spawning aggregations of large snappers and groupers as well as coral reef habitat. The closure would prohibit all fishing activities (excluding pelagic and highly migratory species) for 6 months and retain current, year round gear restrictions.

Alternative 3: Extend closure of Bajo de Sico from 3 months to 12 months in order to provide full protection for spawning aggregations of large snappers and groupers as well as coral reef habitat. The closure would prohibit all fishing activities (excluding pelagic and highly migratory species) for 12 months and retain current, year round gear restrictions.

Following are the comments received at the public hearings:

**Mayaguez, Puerto Rico
September 18, 2008**

1. Nelson Crespo – Commercial Fisherman – Rincón, Puerto Rico

-Suggests a total closure for 6 months instead of all year.
2. Martín Quiñonez Melendez – Comercial Fisherman – El Maní, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico

-Alternative 1. No action. It should stay as it is now.
-They fish for yellowtail and “cabrilla,” which does not affect the area.
3. Fred Lentz – Commercial fisherman – Rincón, Puerto Rico

-Why close the area for the entire year in this area? During the month of October there is a closed season for silk snapper (chillo), from November until May the north winds will not allow much fishing; in February, there is a closed season for groupers. There are enough closures around the whole year.

- Alternative 1. No action. At least until the results of the biodiversity studies that are being conducted are out.
4. Pedro Silva – Representing fishermen from El Maní and El Seco
 - Alternative 1. No action. Do not agree with closing the area.
 - Mona and Desecheo islands are already closed. It is not fair to keep closing areas. The fishermen “will not have anywhere to fish” to be able and make a decent living.
 - All these laws are pushing the decent fishermen to break the law in order to be able to sustain our families.
 5. Pedro A. Perea – Commercial Fisherman, Añasco, Puerto Rico
 - Alternative 1. No action. Leave Bajo de Sico the way it is now.
 6. Greg Engstrom – Ariel-Alexis Fishing Charters
 - Any of the three alternatives would work as long as they are enforced.
 - Prefers to leave Bajo de Sico as is, but understands the need to protect the area.
 7. Robert McMurtray – Recreational Fisher, Rincón, Puerto Rico
 - Any of the three alternatives are good. Agrees with whatever is needed to maintain the stocks in this area.
 - The Bajo de Sico is an important area for the recreational fishermen targeting pelagic and highly migratory species. Therefore, these species should be excluded from the closure.
 8. Manuel Valdés-Pizzini – Sea Grant Program, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico
 - There is not enough data to support the closing of this area.
 - More studies should be conducted on this area, e.g., social impact studies, stock assessment studies, etc.

(Comments submitted in writing are attached to this minute.)

San Juan, Puerto Rico
September 19, 2008

1. Roberto Reyes – Free Diving Spear Fishing Clubs
 - Alternative 2.
 - The capture of pelagic species should be allowed in the area.

St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands
September 22, 2008

1. David Berry – Commercial Fisherman, St. Thomas, USVI

- Alternative 1. No action.
- Proposes to reduce the size in the funnel of traps.

St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands
September 23, 2008

1. Antonio Nieves – Representing Victor Torres Sport Fishing and Diving

- Alternative 1. No action.
- What are the fishermen going to do in one year from now, if we keep closing fishing areas?

2. George Gabrel – Commercial Fisherman, St. Croix, USVI

- Have the PR Fishermen been advised about this closure?

3. Gerson Martínez – Commercial Fisherman, St. Croix, USVI

- Alternative 1. No action.
- The three months closure is working fine for the spawning aggregations. The closures already established are doing good. It is not necessary to extend the closure.
- Fuel cost and the weather are also doing their job in protecting the area.

4. Albert Joaquin – Commercial Fisherman, St. Croix, USVI

- Alternative 1. No action.
- Don't think there should be any more closures.
- The fishermen are already suffering enough.

5. Edward Schuster – Commercial Fisherman, St. Croix, USVI

- Alternative 1. No action.
- A stock assessment study should be conducted, and if needed, then extend the closure for a few more months, but not an entire year closure.
- There are too many closures around all the areas already.

6. Joseph Gilbert – Commercial Fisherman, St. Croix, USVI

- Alternative 1. No action.