

Advisory Panel Meeting Report

By

Edward Schuster

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The AP meeting was held in St. Croix, USVI, on March 24, 2010. Nine members out of fifteen were present, constituting the quorum for voting purposes.

The topics discussed and the recommendations are as follows:

- A. Regarding the SSC Meeting Report, the AP concurs with the SSC that reserved areas could be used for studies to determine if these can be used for stock assessments. However, there are three conditions the AP has for these studies:
 1. No more additional reserves should be established,
 2. Fishers should be hired to do the fishing in these areas, and
 3. Fishers should be fairly compensated as they do with scientists.

- B. The CFMC should recognize that fisher impacts to corals are less than one percent according to the scientific literature. Fishers have mechanisms to retrieve the anchor with no harm to the coral reefs; nets, hook and line and scuba do not harm the reefs; and fishers in general, protect the coral reefs "because from it depend our livelihood."

Actual impacts to coral reefs come from hurricanes, global warming, anchoring by large commercial vessels, sewage, tourist touching the corals, costal runoff, lion fish, etc.

- C. Queen conch quotas should be reviewed by the local government and the federal government should adopt these in the EEZ, rather than closing the EEZ off St. Croix.

- D. Trap reduction-program steering committees should be established as soon as possible to determine the best way to implement such programs. The steering committees will be composed of 9 voting members and two or three non-voting members for St. Thomas-St. John, and 5 voting members with the same number of non-voting members for St. Croix. Members should be from associations and independent fishers. All forms of trap fisheries should be represented.

- E. The AP is expected to meet after public hearings on ACLs to review and make recommendations before the Council meeting in which these will be discussed.

F. Regarding Other Business in the agenda, the AP recommends the following:

1. There should be at least three meetings before council meetings a year, for the AP to provide the necessary advice to the Council.
2. The meetings should be conducted in all three islands to facilitate the familiarization of members with the different fishing sectors of the US Caribbean.
3. Members should be compensated (\$100 daily).
4. CFMC should make sure to appoint members that are really interested and able to contribute to the AP deliberations.
5. The CFMC should express its concerns via a letter to appropriate authorities regarding proposed new reserves in USVI.