



## Caribbean Fishery Bulletin

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**FB17-002**

**FISHERY BULLETIN ISSUE DATE:** January 13, 2017

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### **NOAA Fisheries Seeks Public Comments on an Amendment to Modify the Timing of Accountability Measure-Based Closures in U.S. Caribbean Federal Waters**

*Comment Period Ends March 6, 2017*

NOAA Fisheries requests your comments on the Timing of Accountability Measure-Based Closures Amendment, which amends the U.S. Caribbean Reef Fish, Spiny Lobster, and Corals and Reef Associated Plants and Invertebrates Fishery Management Plans. NOAA Fisheries also requests your comments on the proposed implementing rule.

#### **SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES:**

- If the annual catch limit is exceeded resulting in an accountability measure application, the amendment would shift the end date for implementation of accountability measure-based fishery closures from December 31<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>, extending backward toward the beginning of the year (January 1).
- This amendment applies to all species and species groups managed by the Caribbean Fishery Management Council in federal waters off St. Thomas/St. John, St. Croix, and Puerto Rico, except for queen conch, for which a separate management approach is applied.
- This amendment responds to a request to avoid, to the extent practicable, closures during the year-end holiday season.
- The amendment also proposes a maximum time period of 2-years from implementation of the amendment, and no longer than every 2 years thereafter, for the Caribbean Fishery Management Council to revisit the approach or the date selected to establish the timing of accountability measure-based closures.

#### **HOW TO COMMENT:**

The period for commenting on the amendment is open now through March 6, 2017. The proposed rule will be published soon. You may submit comments on the amendment and/or the proposed rule (when available) by electronic submission or by postal mail. All comments received will be addressed in the final rule. Comments sent by any other method (such as e-mail), to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NOAA Fisheries.

You may obtain electronic copies of these documents from the NOAA Fisheries Website [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/caribbean/generic/timing\\_am\\_closures/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/caribbean/generic/timing_am_closures/index.html) or the Caribbean Fishery Management Council Website: <http://www.caribbeanfmc.com>.

You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2016-0013, by any of the following methods:

**Electronic Submissions:** Submit all electronic comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=NOAA-NMFS-2016-0013-0001>, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

**Mail:** Submit written comments to María del Mar López-Rivera, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.