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FISHERIES

Amendment 3 to the Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John Fishery Management Plans: New Management Measures for Dolphin and Wahoo



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Actions in Amendment 3

- Establish a minimum size limit for **dolphin** in federal waters around Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John.
- Establish a minimum size limit for **wahoo** in federal waters around Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John.
- Establish a recreational bag limit for **dolphin** in federal waters around Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John.
- Establish a recreational bag for **wahoo** in federal waters around Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John.



Purpose and Need Statements

- The purpose of Amendment 3 is to establish size limits and recreational bag limits for dolphin and wahoo under the Puerto Rico Fishery Management Plan, the St. Croix Fishery Management Plan, and the St. Thomas/St. John Fishery Management Plan.
- The need for Amendment 3 is to develop conservation and management measures for dolphin and wahoo to ensure undersized individuals have adequate time to mature and reproduce and to take a precautionary approach to management to protect against overfishing for resources with limited management structure.



Summary of Preferred Alternatives

Management Measure	Puerto Rico	St. Croix	St. Thomas/St. John
Dolphin minimum size limit	Alternative 3 - Establish a 24” fork length minimum size limit for the commercial and recreational harvest of dolphin in federal waters		
Wahoo minimum size limit	Alternative 2 - Establish a 32” fork length minimum size limit for the commercial and recreational harvest of wahoo in federal waters		
Dolphin recreational bag limit	Alternative 3 - Establish a bag limit in federal waters of 5 dolphin/person/day, not to exceed 15 dolphin/vessel/day, whichever is less.	Alternative 2 - Establish a bag limit in federal waters of 10 dolphin/person/day, not to exceed 32 dolphin/vessel/day, whichever is less.	
Wahoo recreational bag limit	Alternative 2 - Establish a bag limit in federal waters of 5 wahoo/person/day, not to exceed 10 wahoo/vessel/day, whichever is less.	Alternative 3 - Establish a bag limit in federal waters of 2 wahoo/person/day, not to exceed 10 wahoo/vessel/day, whichever is less.	

Dolphin Minimum Size Limit Alternatives*

Alternative	Biological Effects	Socio-Economic Effects	Administrative Effects
Alt. 1 – No size limit	All sizes could be removed from population	Commercial and recreational fishers can continue to fish as usual	No new effects
Alt. 2 – 20” fork length minimum	Juvenile fish protected; half the females have time to reproduce; some discards expected	Short-term costs due to restricted fishing; long-term benefits thru a more sustainable population	Require regulations; added time/labor for enforcement officials and for outreach & education
Alt. 3 - 24” fork length minimum	Juvenile fish protected; all females have time to reproduce; more discards expected	Short-term costs would be greater because of the more-restrictive size limit	Same as Alt. 2

*Applies to all three management areas: Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John



Wahoo Minimum Size Limit Alternatives*

Alternative	Biological Effects	Socio-Economic Effects	Administrative Effects
Alt. 1 – No size limit	All sizes could be removed from population	Commercial and recreational fishers can continue to fish as usual	No new effects
Alt. 2 – 32” fork length minimum	Juvenile fish protected; 1/4 th the females have time to reproduce; some discards expected	Short-term costs due to restricted fishing; long-term benefits thru a more sustainable population	Require regulations; added time/labor for enforcement officials and for outreach & education
Alt. 3 - 40” fork length minimum	Juvenile fish protected; all females have time to reproduce; more discards expected	Short-term costs would be greater because of the more-restrictive size limit	Same as Alt. 2

*Applies to all three management areas: Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John



Dolphin Recreational Bag Limit Alternatives – Puerto Rico

Alternative	Biological Effects	Socio-Economic Effects	Administrative Effects
Alt. 1 - No bag limit	All fish caught could be kept	Recreational fishers can continue to fish as usual	No new effects
Alt. 2 – 10/30	Fewer number of fish removed from population; may have some discards	Some reduction in harvest expected: short-term costs, but long-term benefits thru a more sustainable population	Require regulations; added time/labor for enforcement officials and for outreach & education Compatible with current DNER bag limit
Alt. 3 – 5/15	Fewest number of fish removed from population; may have more discards	Greater reduction in harvest expected: short-term costs, but long-term benefits thru a more sustainable population	Require regulations; added time/labor for enforcement officials and for outreach & education; need on the water enforcement to check compliance

Dolphin Recreational Bag Limit Alternatives – St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John

Alternative	Biological Effects	Socio-Economic Effects	Administrative Effects
Alt. 1 - No bag limit	All fish caught could be kept	Recreational fishers can continue to fish as usual	No new effects
Alt. 2 – 10/32	Fewer number of fish removed from population; may have some discards	Some reduction in harvest expected: short-term costs, but long-term benefits thru a more sustainable population	Require regulations; added time/labor for enforcement officials and for outreach & education Compatible with DPNR bag limit*
Alt. 3 – 5/15	Fewest number of fish removed from population; may have more discards	Greater reduction in harvest expected: short-term costs, but long-term benefits thru a more sustainable population	Require regulations; added time/labor for enforcement officials and for outreach & education; need on the water enforcement to check compliance

*The DPNR regulations were not implemented at the time this amendment was prepared.

Wahoo Recreational Bag Limit Alternatives – Puerto Rico

Alternative	Biological Effects	Socio-Economic Effects	Administrative Effects
Alt. 1 - No bag limit	All fish caught could be kept	Recreational fishers can continue to fish as usual	No new effects
Alt. 2 – 5/10	Fewer number of fish removed from population; may have some discards	Some reduction in harvest expected: short-term costs, but long-term benefits thru a more sustainable population	Require regulations; added time/labor for enforcement officials and for outreach & education Compatible with current DNER bag limit
Alt. 3 – 2/6	Fewest number of fish removed from population; may have more discards	Greater reduction in harvest expected: short-term costs, but long-term benefits thru a more sustainable population	Require regulations; added time/labor for enforcement officials and for outreach & education; need on the water enforcement to check compliance

Wahoo Recreational Bag Limit Alternatives – St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John

Alternative	Biological Effects	Socio-Economic Effects	Administrative Effects
Alt. 1 - No bag limit	All fish caught could be kept	Recreational fishers can continue to fish as usual	No new effects
Alt. 2 – 4/20	Fewer number of fish removed from population; may have some discards	Some reduction in harvest expected: short-term costs, but long-term benefits thru a more sustainable population	Require regulations; added time/labor for enforcement officials and for outreach & education Compatible with DPNR bag limit*
Alt. 3 – 2/10	Fewest number of fish removed from population; may have more discards	Greater reduction in harvest expected: short-term costs, but long-term benefits thru a more sustainable population	Require regulations; added time/labor for enforcement officials and for outreach & education; need on the water enforcement to check compliance

*The DPNR regulations were not implemented at the time this amendment was prepared.



Combined effects of Amendment 3

Commercial Fishers	Recreational Fishers
<p>Would need to comply with minimum size limit for any dolphin or wahoo caught in federal waters. This includes fishers who target other species (e.g., HMS) and land dolphin/wahoo as bycatch.</p>	<p>Would need to comply with minimum size limit and daily bag limit for any dolphin or wahoo caught in federal waters.</p>



Action Items and Next Steps

April
2024

- Council reviews final draft amendment and draft codified text
- Council approves Amendment 3 for submission to Secretary of Commerce (allowing staff to make editorial edits)

May
2024

- Staff make editorial edits and sends to Council Chair for review
- Council submits amendment to Secretary of Commerce

June-July
2024

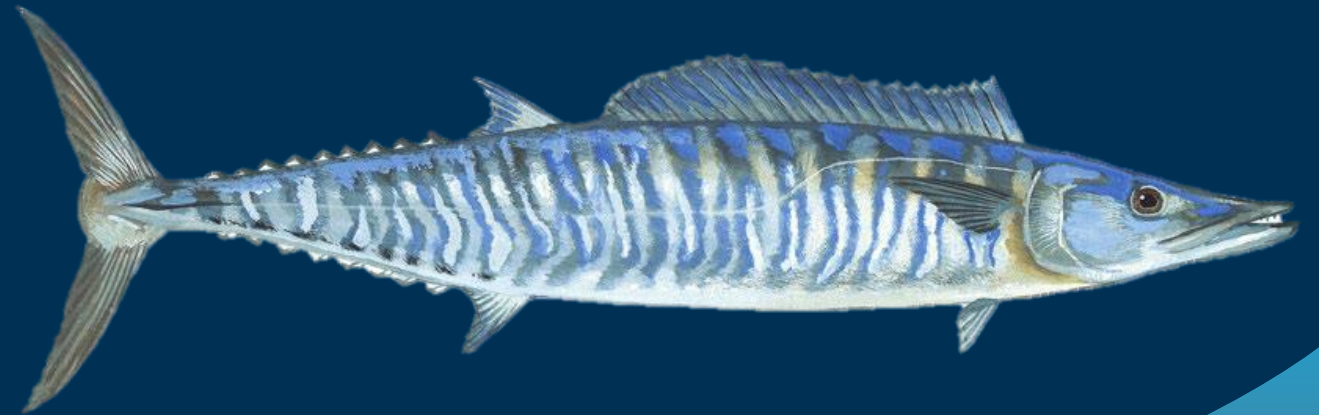
- NMFS begins rulemaking process
- Request for public comments on the amendment and the proposed rule



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Thank You



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