

**Current Federal Regulations in Abrir La Sierra Bank, Bajo de Sico, and Tourmaline Bank
Remain in Effect Until Further Notice**

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council) met on August 12-13, 2014 in Río Grande, Puerto Rico. One topic of discussion centered around three managed areas (Abrir La Sierra Bank, Bajo de Sico, and Tourmaline Bank), partially or fully within federal waters off the west coast of Puerto Rico. These areas are accessed for commercial and recreational harvest. At present, harvest regulations differ among the three areas, creating confusion among fishers and enforcement personnel and apparently reducing compliance rates. With the goal of reducing confusion, increasing compliance rates, and protecting spawning aggregations and the habitat upon which they depend in these areas, the Council identified preferred alternatives for revising management of these areas based on public input and scientific evidence. The table below summarizes the current and proposed regulations that will be implemented if the preferred alternatives identified by the Council are submitted to and approved by the Secretary of Commerce. The Council has not finalized these regulations. Therefore, the current regulations remain in place until further notice. These regulations apply only to federal waters.

	Current Regulations ¹	Proposed Regulations ¹
Length/Period of Closure	<u>Bajo de Sico:</u> Oct 1 - March 31 <u>Abrir La Sierra Bank/Tourmaline Bank:</u> Dec 1 - Feb 28	December 1 - March 31
Reef Fish Harvest	<u>Bajo de Sico:</u> No fishing for or possession of Council-Managed Reef Fish during the Seasonal Closure <u>Abrir La Sierra Bank/Tourmaline Bank:</u> No fishing for any species during the Seasonal Closure	No fishing for or possession of Council-Managed Reef Fish during the Seasonal Closure
Spiny Lobster Harvest	<u>Bajo de Sico:</u> Allowed All Year <u>Abrir La Sierra Bank/Tourmaline Bank:</u> Prohibited during the Seasonal Closure	Allowed All Year
Anchoring	<u>Bajo de Sico:</u> Prohibited All Year <u>Abrir La Sierra Bank/Tourmaline Bank:</u> Allowed All Year	Prohibited All Year
Highly Migratory Species Harvest	<u>Bajo de Sico:</u> Allowed All Year <u>Abrir La Sierra Bank/Tourmaline Bank:</u> Prohibited during the Seasonal Closure	Prohibit Bottom Longline All Year; Only Surface Trolling ² and Spearfishing Allowed
Spearfishing	<u>Bajo de Sico:</u> No spearfishing for Council-Managed Reef Fish during seasonal closure <u>Abrir La Sierra Bank/Tourmaline Bank:</u> No fishing with spearguns during the seasonal closure	No Spearfishing for Council-Managed Reef Fish during the Seasonal Closure

¹ use of bottom-tending gear (pots, traps, bottom longlines, gillnets, and trammel nets) is prohibited

² as defined in §635.21(a)(4)(iv), as fishing with lines trailing behind a vessel which is in constant motion at speeds in excess of four knots with a visible wake. Such trolling may not involve the use of down riggers, wire lines, planers, or similar devices.

For more information, contact Britni LaVine at (727) 824-5305 or Graciela Garcia-Moliner at (787) 766-5926 or visit http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/caribbean/generic/abt/index.html .

This document provides only a summary of the existing regulations. Any discrepancies between this document and the regulations as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.