

Caribbean Fishery Management Council's Report

June 2017

159th REGULAR MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

April 18-19 - The Renaissance St. Croix Carambola Beach Resort & Spa
in St. Croix, USVI

Marine Recreational Fishing data

The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) is a very important initiative that is being implemented in the U.S. Caribbean Region.

The MRIP goal is to have better information on the catches of the recreational fishers. It identifies the priorities of the recreational fishing

in the region and the information gathered will contribute to a better assessment of the stocks for management purposes.

Catch Limits

Catch Limits are scientifically established targets to prevent overfishing and allow stock to rebuild or maintain a healthy status. An Annual Catch Limit (ACL), is the amount of fishing that can be legally caught by fishers over a period of one year. Regional Fishery Management Councils use NOAA Fisheries data and stock assessments to set ACLs each year. With the information provided by the PR and USVI governments, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) establishes the pertinent closure dates for the species been managed in Federal waters.

Stocks or Stock Complexes with OFL Overages 2015 Total Annual Landings (Commercial and Recreational Combined) Relative to the OFL

Species or Complex	2015 Landings (lbs)	Overfishing Level (lbs)	OFL Overage (%)
PR Spiny Lobster	417,503	364,355	114.6
PR Triggerfish and Filefish	98,858	89,337	110.7
PR Wrasses	56,041	65,774	85.2

Closure Dates

Species or Species Group	Closure Date Based on Average 2013-2015 Fishing Rate	Closure Start Date Used
PR Recreational Wrasses	April 19	December 31
PR Commercial Triggerfish & Filefish	August 13	September 30
PR Spiny Lobster	September 7	September 30
PR Commercial Snapper Unit 2	September 15	September 30
PR Recreational Triggerfish and Filefish	September 18	September 30
PR Recreational Jacks	September 28	September 30
PR Recreational Parrotfish	November 4	December 31

Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Report

Dr. Richard Appeldoorn, SSC Chairperson, informed the Council details of the SEDAR 46 which focused on the analysis of the Data Limited Model (DLM) Toolbox and its application as a management strategy evaluation and management advice to determine OFY. The stock/species used for the explanations is the PR yellowtail snapper. The results of the SEDAR 46 will be explored to modify the ABC control rule in setting annual catches. The data limitation on fisheries in the U.S. Caribbean jurisdiction is well known and the application of the DLM seems to be a good alternative to direct management strategies. Extensive discussion with the Council was generated around the issue of

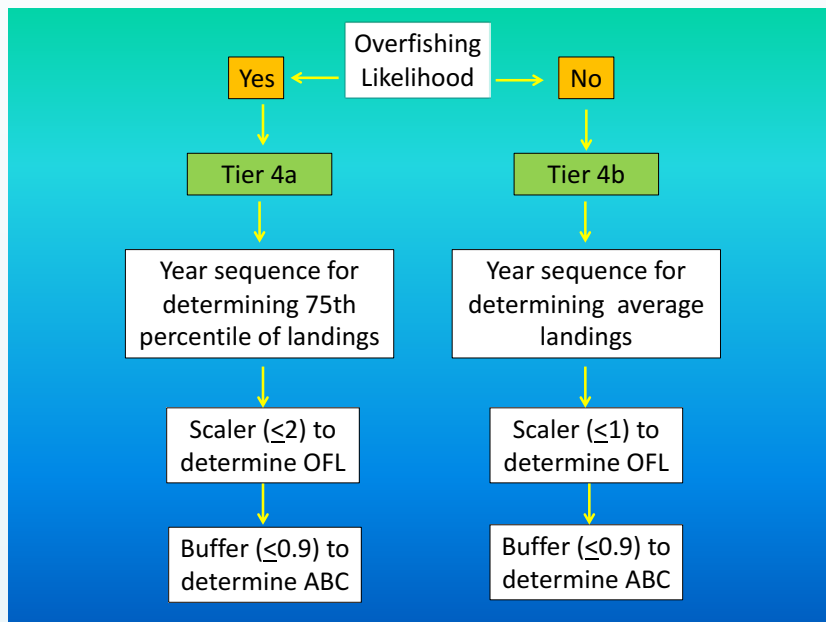
the application of the “expansion factor” that refers to how much underreporting is going on, not the weather conditions or other factors on the fisheries. The discussion emphasized –once more– the importance of obtaining the best data reporting from the fishers, which depends on a rigorous port sampling to provide better data. Related to the Island Based Fishery Management Plans (IBFMPs) the SSC made the following recommendations for IBFMPs:

Action 1: Species lists. No change from previous recommendation

Action 2: Definition of indicator species. Indicator species evaluated according to these criteria:

- Species represent a significant majority of the catch
- Fishers are seeking this species
- Life history/vulnerability is representative of the unit/complex or is more conservative of other members of the group
- Species occur in the same habitats as the others in the unit/complex
- Species co-occur in the fishery (e.g., traps)
- The amount of data available is potentially sufficient for providing catch advice
- Species was equal in the market relative to other species

Action 3: setting reference points ABC Control Rule: “Applications” of Scalars and Buffers. Scaler = 1.5, Buffer = 0.9 Resulting ABC is 75% higher than current ACL. The diagram above illustrates the flowchart for the determination of the ABC Control Rule.



District Advisory Panels (DAP) Reports

The DAPs Chairpersons from PR, STT/STJ and STX presented the results of their previous meetings to the Council.

DAP-PR: Mr. Nelson Crespo, Chairperson

Emphasized the need to consider differences in all coasts, especially for managing Wenchman (Limosnera/ Pristipomoides aquinolaris). On Snapper Unit 4B, SU4B (Dog snapper/ Lutjanus jocu and Schoolmaster/Lutjanus apodus) should remain together. Do not use ciguatera as an issue for decision on harvesting or not, since not all are ciguatoxic all the time, it depends on the area where they are caught.

The discussion on ciguatera applied to a few groups and it is a concern because of the resultant economic impacts if someone is “poisoned”. The group emphasized the importance of education and research on this topic considering the differences among the areas where ciguatera occurs. The topic of ciguatera was further discussed by the DAP-PR and the following comments were made:



- Ciguatera should not be considered to establish stock complexes; we could have species that are in the same area that have ciguatera and others that don't.
- To avoid ciguatera, you could consider establishing a size limit because it is known that fish that are bigger are the ones that generally have ciguatera.
- Big fish don't have a market because of the ciguatera risk not because they are infrequent.
- Ciguatera cases have increased in Arecibo (north coast).
- Conduct studies about ciguatera in PR to have a better understanding of the problem

DAP-STT/STJ: Julian Magras, Chairperson

Basically, they concurred with the composition of the fishing units that are in place now. Made emphasis on the need for recreational fishing statistics to define the status of the different fishing units.



DAP-STX: Eddie Schuster, Chairperson

This DAP agreed to keep the fishing units, essentially as they are now. The only change proposed was to eliminate dolphinfish and wahoo from the list of federally managed species. If kept in the management unit, these should have a high as possible ACL. These two species are seasonal in and around the Island and during the pelagic season fishers are off the reef. They also requested that the common names of fish should be included in all tables and these should be broadly distributed to the public. This will impact the reporting since fishers will know the common name of the species and report more accurately.



Status of Island Based Fishery Management Plans (IBFMP)

After considering the recommendations presented by the SSC and the DAPs from Puerto Rico, St. Thomas/ St. John and St. Croix the following Actions, with different alternatives for each Action will be addressed:

- Action 1:** Determine Species to be Included for Management in the X Island FMP
- Action 2:** Establish Stocks or Stock Complexes in the X Island FMP
- Action 3:** Management Reference Points
- Action 4:** Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Description and Identification for Species Not Previously Managed in Federal Waters of X Island

December 2016	Council Meeting	Reviewed DRAFT Actions and Alternatives; Goals and Objectives from PR, STT/STJ, STX; Action 3 guidance; Next steps
February 2-6, 2017	SSC Meeting	Finalized Action 1 species selection. Discussed Action 2 groupings. Scheduled new SSC Meeting for April 2017 to finalize Action 2 and Action 3
March 7-8, 2017	DAP Meetings	Reviewed and Commented on Actions and Alternatives-emphasis groupings . Meanwhile, staff continued development of DRAFT FMPs Public Hearing Drafts and DEIS's
April 3-7, 2017	SSC Meeting	Finalized Action 2 groupings. Finalized Action 3 year sequences for Puerto Rico. Scheduled new SSC Meeting for July 2017 to finalize Action 3.
April 18-19, 2017	Council Meeting	SSC preliminary outcomes; DAP input
Spring/Summer	IPT	Continue development of DEIS's with info available
July 10-14, 2017	SSC Meeting	Finalize Action 3 for all island management areas
Summer 2017	IPT	Continue development of DEIS's with information from SSC mtg.
August 15-16, 2017	Council Meeting	Review outcomes of July SSC Meeting; Review first draft of DEIS's; Choose Preferred Alts*
Fall 2017	IPT	Finalize FMPs PHDs and DEIS's for December Council Meeting
Dec 13-14, 2017	Council Meeting	Council reviews FMPs PHDs and DEIS's (if no changes needed approve for public hearings and DEIS's publication)
Winter 2018	Staff	Publish DEIS's for public comment. Hold Public Hearings
Spring 2018	Council Meeting	Council votes to submit FMPs for Secretarial approval

The revised Timeline for the completion of the IBFMPs presented to the Council.



Regulatory Amendment 6 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan: Triggering Accountability Measures in the Puerto Rico Exclusive Economic Zone

The objective of this Amendment is to revise how accountability measures are triggered for the Puerto Rico reef fish fishery, to increase the likelihood that optimum yield (OY) is achieved, while maintaining sector-specific accountability measures, and to minimize, to the extent practicable, adverse socio-economic effects of accountability measure-based closure. An online Public Hearing

from St. Croix was conducted with fishers participating in Mayagüez and San Juan. The participants selected Alternative 2: The AM for a stock or stock complex would be triggered for either the recreational or commercial fishing sector if that sector's applicable ACL for a stock/complex is exceeded and the combined recreational and commercial (i.e., total) ACL for that stock/complex is exceeded.

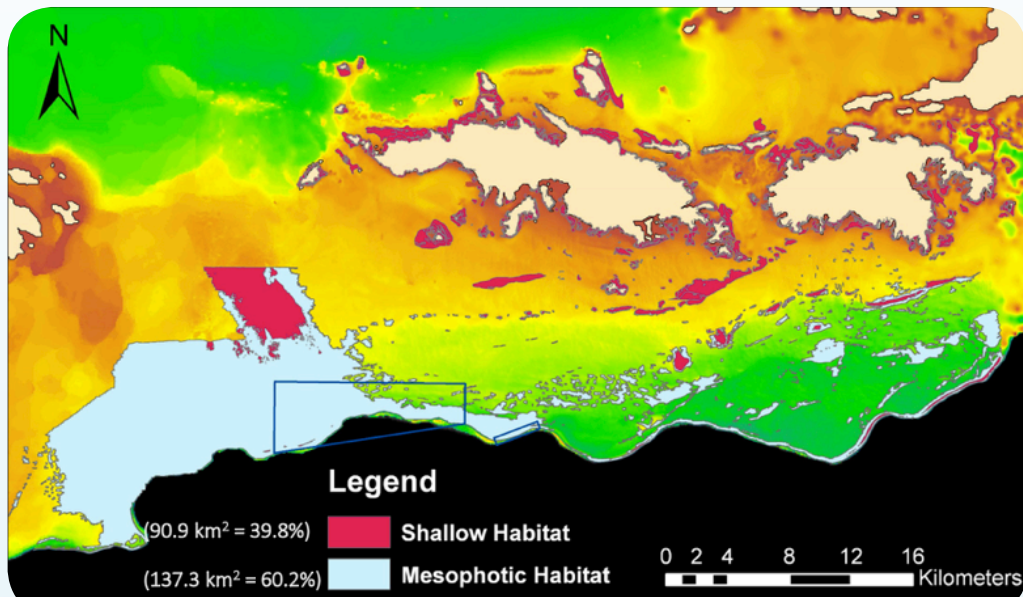
A Motion was presented and approved by the Council, to submit the Regulatory Amendment 6 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan of Puerto Rico and the USVI: Triggering Accountability Measures in the Puerto Rico Exclusive Economic Zone for Secretarial review, Alternative 2 as the preferred.

Final Rule Modifies the Timing of Accountability Measure-Based Closures in U.S. Caribbean Federal Waters

NOAA Fisheries announced a final rule modifying the date for implementation of accountability measure-based closures for U.S. Caribbean reef fish, spiny lobster, and coral resources managed by the Caribbean Fishery Management Council. The purpose of this rule is to minimize, to the extent practicable, adverse socio-economic impacts of accountability measure-based closures, while protecting the fishery resource. The rule will take effect on June 8, 2017. What this rule does:

- If the annual catch limit is exceeded, resulting in an accountability measure application, the rule will shift the date for implementing an accountability measure-based fishery closure from December 31st to September 30th, extending backward toward the beginning of the year (January 1).
- If the length of the required fishing season reduction exceeds the period of January 1 through September 30, any additional fishing season reduction required will be applied from October 1 forward, toward the end of the fishing year (December 31).
- The amendment also establishes a maximum period of two years from implementation of the amendment, and no longer than every two years thereafter, for the Caribbean Fishery Management Council to revisit the approach or the date selected.
- This final rule results from Amendments to the U.S. Caribbean Reef Fish, Spiny Lobster, and Corals and Reef Associated Plants and Invertebrates Fishery Management Plans recommended to NOAA Fisheries by the Caribbean Fishery Management Council.

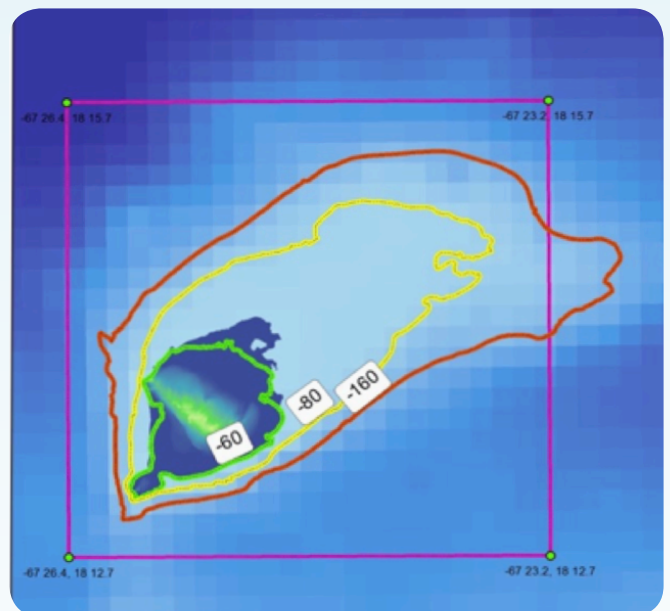
Sustainability and Recovery of Groupers (Nassau and Yellowfin) in Aggregations



Grammanick Bank in St. Thomas

Richard Nemeth, Michelle Scharrer and Héctor Ruiz presented the research conducted on visual counts and acoustic tagging at Grammanick Bank (GB) (STT) and Bajo de Sico (BDS). They observed that:

- Nassau grouper at GB aggregate earlier than in BDS.
- Timing of peak abundance relative to full moon more variable than expected – possible effects of temperature or currents.
- Nassau grouper are larger at BDS than GB, but GB shows signs of recruitment pulse of small fish.
- About 50% of Nassau grouper at BDS are resident, none at GB.
- Acoustic data shows Nassau grouper aggregates from January to April at both sites.
- Acoustic depth data shows distinct movements into deep water and up into water column during most spawning months.



Bajo de Sico

Update on the Puerto Rico Fishers Spiny Lobster Data Collection Initiative

Tony Iarocci, project spokesperson, presented to the Council the status of this Cooperative research project. The group participated in a Spiny Lobster Fisheries Workshop where the status of the stock appears to be healthy and the carapace length has been increasing in the catch, according to Dr. Bill Arnold's presentation. New data gathered by fishers in this project will help in solving management issues and probably replace the management measures in place. There were recommendations

from scientists of the SEFSC to make changes in the forms to gather the data collected more useful for the science decisions. The goal of this project is to improve data collected by the DNER. At present, these are the participants in the Project: Ricardo Miranda, Brian Matias, Nelson Crespo, Julio Ramos, Miguel Vargas, Fred Lentz (diver), Carlos Velasquez, Reynaldo Rivera and Ismael Peña. The next steps will be to bring in more participants to get more data, revise the

form, create instruction sheet and conduct workshops throughout the island to be presented in the CFMC August meeting.



Outreach & Education

Helena Antoun, CFMC- independent contractor for Puerto Rico, updated the status of the Education Program for Commercial Fishers (PEPCO, for the Spanish name) and the Marine Resource Education Program Caribbean (MREPC). The CFMC collaborates in both. PEPCO and MREP are important education initiatives in motivating fishers to actively participate in the management process conducted at the local and federal levels. PEPCO program continues to grow in popularity and demand as fishers are starting to learn about the program. PEPCO provides a forum for, not only informing fishers of local regulations and management but also for, providing an opportunity to speak directly with DNER personnel. Also, port agents continue to note that data landing reports are improving as fishers are starting to understand the importance and impact reporting catch landings have on fishery management. Since 2014, 510 fishers have participated in seven PEPCO workshops conducted in different fishing communities in Puerto Rico.





CFMC REPORT

MREP held its 2nd workshop in PR and based on the evaluations, participants rated the workshop highly. When asked how many of them had previously participated in Council related activities, participants scored a 2.6 out of 5 as involved in fishery management process and meetings. When asked, post workshop, how likely they would be to participate in Council related activities, participants scored a 4.7 out of 5 as likely to participate in

Council related activities. To conclude, MREP workshops are having a definite and positive impact on how fishers view fishery management and the importance of the role they play as stakeholders. The first USVI MREP was scheduled for May 23 – 25, 2017, in St. Thomas. Visit the CFMC Facebook page to keep up to date with the different activities and announcements of interest to fishers and public.



MREPPR Lab session at Magueyes Lab in Parguera



MREP 2017 participants in Puerto Rico



Council member, Marcos Hanke with a group of elementary school students.

Update of the status of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP)

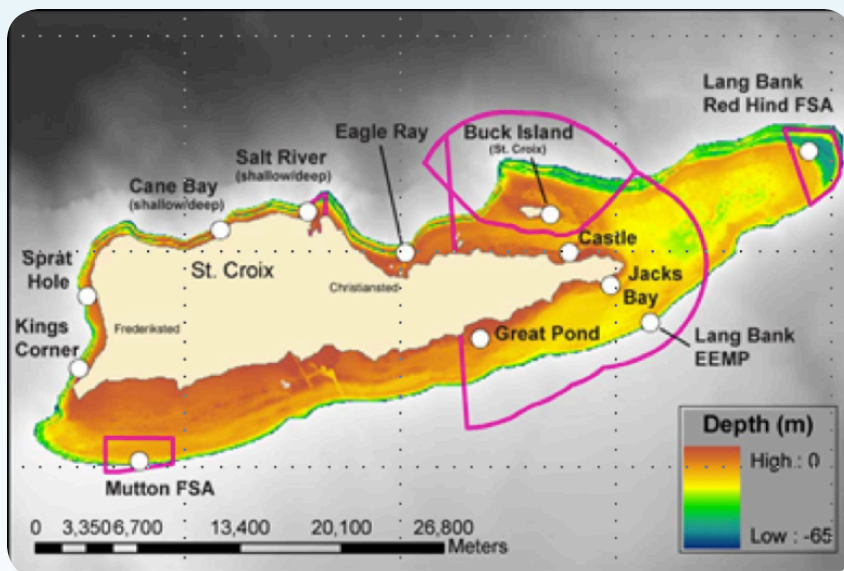
To comply with the mandate of integrating the principles of the Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM), in the Fishery Management Plans (FMP), Dr. Bill Arnold explained that the FEP Includes ecosystem-scale information on structure and function; biogeographical information; relationship between living marine systems and will be a guidance document to aid in the refinement of FMPs that consider ecosystem relationships between species and their habitats from “**Ridge to Reef**”. Its development will require extensive data compilation, and cooperation with other agencies to build a geospatial database.

For more information go to:

Bill Arnold, Ph.D, SERO Bill.Arnold@noaa.gov ; Cynthia Meyer, Ph.D, SERO Cynthia.Meyer@noaa.gov and Additional Resources: <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/ecosystems/ebfm/index>

Research on MPA effectiveness in the USVI

Dr. Clayton Pollock, from the National Park Service presented to the Council their very interesting research on MPA Effectiveness through Collaboration at the Buck Island Reef National Monument in St. Croix. The objectives of their research are to quantify habitat usage and home ranges, determine migration timing and spawning aggregation sites, evaluate site fidelity and connectivity between MPAs and determine the efficacy of the MPAs. In the future, they want to expand their studies to the PR submerged platform.





Next Meetings:

CFMC Meeting:

August 15-16, 2017 at the Courtyard
Marriott in Carolina, PR

CFMC Meeting:

December 12-13, 2017 at the
Frenchman's Reef in St. Thomas, USVI

Acronyms

ABC - Acceptable Biological Catch
ACL - Annual Catch Limit
AM - Accountability Measures
CFMC - Caribbean Fishery Management Council
DAP - District Advisory Panel
EEZ - Exclusive Economic Zone
FMP - Fishery Management Plans
FMU - Fishery Management Unit
IBFMP - Island Based Fishery Management Plan
MSA - Magnuson Steven Act
NMFS - National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NS1 - National Standard 1
OFL - Overfishing Limit
OY - Optimum Yield
PR - Puerto Rico
SSC - Scientific and Statistical Committee
STT/STJ - St. Thomas / St. John
STX - St. Croix
USVI - United States Virgin Islands

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Editor's Note

The Caribbean Newsletter is published by The Caribbean Fishery Management Council. Its purpose is to report developments in fisheries management that would be of interest to its readers. Please credit the council when reprinting articles used in this newsletter. Anyone wishing to submit information or articles pertaining to fishing or fisheries management, or letters to the editor on a pertinent issue, is invited and encouraged to do so. These may be mailed to Natalia Perdomo, Caribbean Newsletter, 270 Muñoz Rivera Avenue Suite 401 San Juan Puerto Rico, 00918, or may be sent via internet to this email address nataliaperdomo_cfmc@yahoo.com.