



Caribbean Fishery Bulletin

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FB17-010

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CONTACT: María del Mar López, 727-824-5305, maria.lopez@noaa.gov

NOAA Fisheries Seeks Public Comment on the Proposed Rule to Modify the Timing of Accountability Measure-Based Closures in U.S. Caribbean Federal Waters

Comment Period Ends March 13, 2017

NOAA Fisheries requests your comments on the proposed rule for 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.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

- If the annual catch limit is exceeded, resulting in an accountability measure application, the proposed rule would shift the end date for implementing accountability measure-based fishery closures from December 31st to September 30th, extending backward toward the beginning of the year (January 1).
- This action 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 action 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 proposed rule is open now through **March 13, 2017**. You may submit comments on the proposed rule 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 or the Caribbean Fishery Management Council Website: <http://www.caribbeanfmc.com>.

You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2016-0013-0003, 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-2016-0013-0003>, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

Mail: Submit written comments to María del Mar López, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.