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Stock Status Updates for Select Stocks/Complexes under the Island-based Fishery Management Plans



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185th Caribbean Fishery Management Council Meeting
December 4-5, 2024

Stock Status Updates

- NOAA Fisheries' Office of Sustainable Fisheries posts quarterly fish stock status updates for stocks managed under federal fishery management plans.
- This information is then compiled in an annual report to Congress ([2023 Report](#)).
- Stock status definitions include:
 - Overfishing – The annual rate of catch is too high.
 - Overfished – The population size is too small.
 - Rebuilt – A previously overfished stock that has increased in abundance to the target population size that supports its maximum sustainable yield.



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Excerpt from 3rd Quarter Update in 2024

National Marine Fisheries Service - 3rd Quarter 2024 Update

Table C. Summary of Stock Status for non-FSSI Stocks

Jurisdiction	FMP	Stock	Overfishing	Overfished
CFMC	St. Croix Fishery Management Plan	St. Croix Squirrelfish *	No	Unknown
CFMC	St. Croix Fishery Management Plan	St. Croix Surgeonfish Complex *	No	Unknown
CFMC	St. Croix Fishery Management Plan	St. Croix Triggerfish *	No	Unknown
CFMC	St. Croix Fishery Management Plan	Wahoo - St. Croix	No	Unknown
CFMC	St. Thomas and St. John Fishery Management Plan	Dolphinfish - St. Thomas / St. John	No	Unknown
CFMC	St. Thomas and St. John Fishery Management Plan	St. Thomas / St. John Angelfish *	No	Unknown
CFMC	St. Thomas and St. John Fishery Management Plan	St. Thomas / St. John Grouper Unit 3 *	No	Unknown
CFMC	St. Thomas and St. John Fishery Management Plan	St. Thomas / St. John Grouper Unit 4 *	No	Unknown
CFMC	St. Thomas and St. John Fishery Management Plan	St. Thomas / St. John Grouper Unit 5 *	No	Unknown
CFMC	St. Thomas and St. John Fishery Management Plan	St. Thomas / St. John Grunt Unit 1 *	No	Unknown



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Stock Status Determinations

- NOAA Fisheries uses stock assessments and reference points to determine whether the stock is subject to overfishing or overfished.
- Under the island-based FMPs, a stock is subject to overfishing if catch (landings) is greater than the overfishing limit (OFL) or its proxy.
- For Tier 4 stocks (except spiny lobster and queen triggerfish) – the sustainable yield level (SYL) is the OFL proxy.



Issue

- Managed stocks require status determination criteria, including stocks for which harvest and possession is prohibited.
- 15 stocks/complexes in the FMPs do not have an SYL specified (i.e., listed as NA); landings during the reference period were zero.
 - **Grouper 1** (Nassau grouper) and **Grouper 2** (goliath grouper) in St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John.
 - **Parrotfish 1 complex** (blue, rainbow, midnight parrotfish) in St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John.
 - **Sea urchins complex** in Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John.
 - **Sea cucumbers complex** in Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John.
 - **Corals complex** in Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John.
- Without a number to compare the landings to, the overfishing status is listed as “unknown”, which is problematic for stock status reporting.



Options

1. Consider tasking the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) with evaluating whether the stocks/complexes should be moved to **Ecosystem Component (EC) Species**.
 - a) EC Species are stocks that a Council determines do not require conservation and management, but are included in a FMP to achieve ecosystem management objectives.
 - b) EC species do not require status determination criteria (e.g., overfishing limits).
 - c) Management measures can be adopted for EC Species. For example, to collect data on the EC species, minimize bycatch or bycatch mortality of EC species, protect the associated role of EC species in the ecosystem, and/or to address other ecosystem issues, such as habitat impacts ([81 FR 71858](#), October 18, 2016).
2. Consider tasking the SSC to specify numerical SYLs based on information available for each stock/complex.

*[50 CFR 600.305\(c\)\(5\)](#)



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Next Steps

- Council could task the SSC to review this issue at their next meeting.
- If possible, the SSC Chair could present the committee's recommendation(s) at the Council's April 2025 meeting.
- The Council and NMFS could discuss which stocks/complexes could be designated as EC species.
- Council could direct staff to begin an amendment to the applicable FMP.
 - Create an interdisciplinary planning team
 - Develop a draft options document for the Council's August 2025 meeting.

