

Draft Vision

Thriving and resilient island ecosystems, fisheries, and fishing communities that provide cultural, social, and economic benefits for all.

Draft Mission

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council conserves, restores and manages fishery resources in the U.S. Caribbean consistent with the requirements of the Magnuson Stevens Act. The Council is committed to advancing the collaborative stewardship of these fisheries and supporting island ecosystems through education, outreach, and stakeholder input.

Draft Goal Statements

Management

Advance management approaches that promote healthy local fisheries and ecosystems, consider the needs of island fishing communities, and foster collaboration among management partners.

Ecosystem and Resource Health

Promote sustainable utilization of local marine resources in a manner that maintains local ecological structure and function and provides for resilient fishery resources.

Social, Cultural and Economic Issues

Ensure that management decisions consider the unique characteristics and needs of island fishing communities while promoting fair and equitable resource use.

Communication and Outreach

Engage, educate, and inform a variety of audiences to improve public understanding and participation in the Council process.

Management Goal: Draft Island-Specific Objectives and Strategies

PUERTO RICO

Objective 1: Support the development of accurate, timely, and cost-effective data collection, reporting, and monitoring programs.

Draft Strategies:

- Improving fishery-independent data through partnerships.
- Prioritize data collection for species subject to seasonal and area closures.
- Expand education/outreach on commercial e-reporting technology.
- Continue participation in re-initiation of MRIP in Puerto Rico.
- Support SEFSC & DRNA improvements to commercial sampling.
- Support SEFSC fishery-independent deep-water snapper-grouper survey.
- Support local government efforts to increase port sampling and port agents.

Objective 2: Promote fisher involvement and other collaborative research approaches to meeting island-specific science and information needs.

Draft Strategies:

- Develop and prioritize a list of PR-specific research needs.
- Work with science and research partners to prioritize stock assessments for species subject to seasonal and area closures.
- Collaborate w/SeaGrant to ensure PR-specific research needs included in grant opportunities.
- Incorporate fisher observations into stock assessments.
- Develop list of Puerto Rico science and data needs that could be addressed using commercial and recreational fisher involvement.

Objective 3: Ensure that management measures encourage regulatory compliance and foster effective enforcement.

Draft Strategies:

- Review effectiveness of existing PR measures.
- Work w/PR DRNA to foster regulatory consistency.
- Work with DRNA and NOAA OLE, USCG and local marine enforcement agencies to support cross-training of personnel.
- Collaborate w/management partners to develop commercial & recreational compliance guides for PR, etc.

Objective 4: Collaborate with domestic and international partners to promote adaptive and efficient management that considers diverse community interests.

Draft Strategies:

- Regularly review effectiveness of existing management measures (spawning areas/closures).
- Work w/partners to develop clearly stated objectives for management actions.
- Address impacts of bycatch on ecosystem relationships.
- Participate in WECAFC queen conch workgroup.
- Evaluate new and existing management measures for consistency with local ecosystem productivity using ecosystem status reports.

Management Goal: Draft Island-Specific Objectives and Strategies

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN

Objective 5: Support the development of accurate, timely, and cost-effective data collection, reporting, and monitoring programs.

Draft Strategies:

- Support NOAA Fisheries and USVI DPNR efforts to improve recreational reporting and establish an MRIP survey in STT/STJ.
- Support SEFSC efforts to work w/DPNR to design/implement a multi-mode catch sampling program.
- Prioritize data collection for species subject to seasonal and area closures.
- Support USVI efforts to examine licensing modifications/improvements.

Objective 6: Promote fisher involvement and other collaborative research approaches to meeting island-specific science and information needs.

Draft Strategies:

- Collaborate with science partners and fishers to develop and prioritize a STT-STJ-specific list of research needs.
- Prioritize and involve fishers in urgently needed stock assessments for species subject to seasonal and area closures.
- Encourage collaborative studies on effectiveness of Grammanik Bank and other closed areas
- Work with SEFSC to identify key species for which fishers could assist in obtaining biological samples.
- Support joint SEFSC, DPNR, NPS efforts to improve information for data-limited stock assessments (e.g. gear selectivity studies in STT and STJ; etc.).
- Develop educational materials to promote fisher understanding of science and information needs.

Objective 7: Ensure that management measures encourage regulatory compliance and foster effective enforcement.

Draft Strategies:

- Coordinate with NOAA OLE, USVI DPNR and USCG to review enforceability of existing regulations.
- Support cross-training of enforcement personnel.
- Identify enforcement gaps in existing STT/STJ regulations.
- Promote development of clear, understandable compliance guides for commercial and recreational stakeholders.

Objective 8: Collaborate with domestic and international partners to promote adaptive and efficient management of fishery resources.

Draft Strategies:

- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of existing seasonal and area closures as soon as possible.
- Reduce bycatch and waste through gear modifications and seasonal restrictions.
- Collaborate with DPNR to develop consistent management measures where appropriate.
- Ensure measures accommodate STT/STJ local ecosystem productivity.
- Participate in international forums such as WECAFC and CRFM efforts to improve understanding and management of Caribbean-wide resources.

Objective 9: Consider the potential impacts of climate change on the efficacy of management measures.

Draft Strategies:

- Use USVI (STT-STJ) ecosystem status reports to inform development of management measures
- Evaluate fishery-independent information for climate-related impacts and trends.
- Solicit fisher input regarding climate-related changes in species and habitats.

Management Goal: Draft Island-Specific Objectives and Strategies

ST. CROIX

Objective 10: Support the development and implementation of accurate, timely, and cost-effective data collection, reporting, and monitoring programs.

Draft Strategies:

- Support NOAA Fisheries and USVI DPNR efforts to improve recreational reporting and establish an MRIP survey in STX as per the MRIP regional implementation plan.
- Support efforts by USVI to review/modify licensing requirements to improve catch reporting.
- Support SEFSC efforts to work w/DPNR to design/implement a multi-mode catch sampling program.
- Collaborate w/USVI DPNR on education/outreach regarding accurate catch reporting.
- Prioritize data collection for species subject to seasonal and area closures.

Objective 11: Promote fisher involvement and other collaborative research approaches to meeting island-specific science and information needs.

Draft Strategies:

- Support joint SEFSC, USVI DPNR, NPS gear selectivity studies in STX.
- Identify opportunities for fishers to contribute to biological samples for parrotfish and other species.
- Support research by academic science partners to improve data-limited species assessments.
- Collaborate with science partners to develop STX-specific list of research needs.
- Ensure that closed areas are correctly marked by buoys (e.g. Buck Island)

Objective 12: Ensure that management measures encourage regulatory compliance and foster effective enforcement.

Draft Strategies:

- Coordinate with NOAA OLE and USVI DPNR to review consistency of existing regulations for federally-managed species.
- Support cross-training of enforcement personnel.
- Identify enforcement gaps for existing STX regulations.
- Review regulations for effectiveness and/or redundancy.
- Develop clear, understandable compliance guides for commercial and recreational fishers.

Objective 13: Collaborate with domestic and international partners to promote adaptive and efficient management of fishery resources that balances commercial and recreational interests.

Draft Strategies:

- Work with NOAA Fisheries and DPNR to reduce bycatch through gear and seasonal modifications.
- Work w/DPNR and NOAA OLE to develop consistent regulations where appropriate.
- Ensure measures accommodate STX local ecosystem productivity.
- Involve both STX Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC) and DAP in review/development of management measures to evaluate commercial and recreational community impacts.
- Ensure that management measures consider/address the potential impacts of climate change.
- Ensure that management approaches consider the impacts of invasive species.
- Explore underutilized species as a means to reduce pressure on currently fully-utilized species.

Ecosystem and Resource Health Goal: Draft Island-Specific Objectives and Strategies PUERTO RICO

Objective 14: Implement the Fishery Ecosystem Plan as a roadmap for future Council actions to maintain the ecological relationships, roles, and services of Puerto Rico's island ecosystem.

Draft Strategies:

- Evaluate existing spawning season closures and closed areas (Bajo de Sico, Tourmaline Bank, Abrir la Sierra) to determine contributions to ecosystem integrity.
- Establish a schedule to regularly evaluate and monitor closed seasons/areas.
- Collaborate with science partners and stakeholders to improve local ecosystem information.
- Establish a process to incorporate ecosystem information and approaches into management measures specific to Puerto Rico.
- Identify enforcement concerns that may impact ecological relationships.

Objective 15: Identify, manage, and protect coral reef and other fishery resource habitats of Puerto Rico.

Draft Strategies:

- Develop Council habitat policies that address impacts to EFH from coastal development, erosion & sedimentation, and other forms of pollution.
- Develop outreach materials on impacts of habitat loss from non-fishing impacts (erosion/sedimentation) and communicate/collaborate with agencies responsible for managing these activities.
- Support SEFSC mapping efforts and collaborate w/science partners to identify Puerto Rico habitat mapping needs.
- Work with management partners to establish clear goals for 5-year EFH reviews.
- Ensure that EFH designations account for ecological roles/relationships of species.
- Support projects that rehabilitate fishery habitats to offset habitat loss or damage.

Objective 16: Collaborate with management partners to address the impacts of natural disasters on ecosystem structure and function.

Draft Strategies:

- Determine data needed to evaluate impacts of natural disasters on species and habitats.
- Incorporate effects of natural disasters into the development of Ecosystem Status Reports.
- Evaluate the flexibility of existing management approaches to respond to local ecosystem impacts from hurricanes and earthquakes.
- Establish a process to collect fishermen observations on local impacts of natural disasters.

Objective 17: Collaborate with management partners to address enforcement concerns that may affect ecological relationships.

Draft Strategies:

- Conduct outreach with NOAA OLE and DRNA enforcement personnel regarding impacts of illegal fishing activities on fishery resources/habitats.
- Conduct outreach to PR agencies on impacts of non-fishing impacts/development on ecosystem structure/function.
- Conduct outreach with the fishing community to communicate the impacts of illegal fishing on the health of the resource.

Ecosystem and Resource Health Goal: Draft Island-Specific Objectives and Strategies

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN

Objective 18: Implement the Fishery Ecosystem Plan as a roadmap for future Council actions to maintain the ecological relationships, roles, and services of the St. Thomas and St. John island ecosystem.

Draft Strategies:

- Collaborate with science partners and stakeholders to identify gaps and improve local biological and ecosystem information for STT/STJ.
- Evaluate existing spawning season closures and closed areas (e.g., Grammanik Bank, Hind Bank) to determine contributions to ecosystem integrity.
- Establish a process to incorporate ecosystem information and approaches into management measures for STT/STJ.
- Consider ecosystem approaches that are responsive to climate change.

Objective 19: Identify, manage, and protect coral reef and other fishery resource habitats of St. Thomas and St. John.

Draft Strategies:

- Develop Council habitat policies that address impacts to EFH from coastal development, erosion/sedimentation, and other forms of pollution that impact STT/STJ habitats
- Develop outreach materials on impacts of habitat loss from non-fishing impacts.
- Work with management partners to establish clear goals for 5-year EFH reviews.
- Ensure that EFH designations account for ecological roles/relationships of species.
- Utilize the Council's EFH comment authority to address federally-permitted projects that may impact ecologically-sensitive habitats.

Objective 20: Encourage efforts to create and rehabilitate fishery resource habitats that support ecosystem structure and function.

Draft Strategies:

- Work with federal and territorial management partners and stakeholders to identify opportunities for habitat enhancement.
- Explore opportunities for funding from USFWS, NOAA's Marine Debris Removal Program, and other federal agencies to use certain types of marine debris for habitat creation.
- Identify habitat restoration needs for NOAA's Office of Habitat Conservation grant programs.

Objective 21: Collaborate with management partners to address enforcement concerns that may affect ecological relationships.

Draft Strategies:

- Conduct outreach with NOAA OLE and DPNR enforcement personnel regarding impacts of illegal fishing activities on fishery resources/habitats.
- Conduct outreach to permitting agencies on impacts of non-fishing activities/development on ecosystem structure/function.

Objective 22: Collaborate with science partners to identify and address ecological data and information gaps.

Draft Strategies:

- Explore existing datasets to fill information gaps.
- Communicate STT/STJ ecosystem information needs to academic partners.
- Collaborate with science partners to prioritize ecological data needs, consistent with NOAA's Caribbean Regional EBFM Implementation Plan.

Ecosystem and Resource Health Goal: Draft Island-Specific Objectives and Strategies

ST. CROIX

Objective 23: Implement the Fishery Ecosystem Plan as a roadmap for future Council actions to maintain the ecological relationships, roles, and services of St. Croix's island ecosystem.

Draft Strategies:

- Collaborate with science partners and stakeholders (e.g. other NGOs, TNC, CORE, commercial/recreational fishers) to identify gaps and improve local biological and ecosystem information for STX.
- Evaluate existing spawning season closures and closed areas (mutton snapper, Lang Bank) to determine contributions to ecosystem integrity.
- Establish a process to incorporate ecosystem information and approaches into management measures for STX.
- Ensure that ecosystem -based management approaches are responsive to climate change.
- Explore use of underutilized and underdeveloped species/resources to reduce pressure and maintain ecological relationships.

Objective 24: Identify, manage, and protect coral reef and other fishery resource habitats of St. Croix.

Draft Strategies

- Develop Council habitat policies that address impacts to EFH from coastal development, erosion/sedimentation, and other forms of pollution that impact STX habitats.
- Support modifications to territorial coastal zone regulations that reduce sedimentation and erosion.
- Work with management partners to establish clear goals for 5-year EFH review.
- Ensure that EFH designations account for ecological roles/relationships of species.
- Utilize the Council's EFH comment authority to address federally-permitted projects that may impact ecologically-sensitive habitats.
- Ensure that juvenile habitats are sufficiently protected.

Objective 25: Encourage efforts to rehabilitate and/or create fishery resource habitats that support ecosystem structure and function.

Draft Strategies:

- Work with federal and territorial management partners and others to identify opportunities for habitat enhancement and restoration.
- Explore opportunities to address the impacts of invasive species on STX fishery habitats.
- Investigate the potential of FADs to mitigate habitat losses and deploy FADs where appropriate.
- Identify habitat restoration needs for NOAA's Office of Habitat Conservation grant programs.

Objective 26: Collaborate with management partners to address enforcement concerns that may affect ecological relationships.

Draft Strategies:

- Conduct outreach with NOAA OLE and DPNR enforcement personnel regarding ecological impacts of illegal fishing activities.
- Conduct outreach to permitting agencies on potential impacts of non-fishing activities/development on ecosystem structure/function.

Objective 27: Collaborate with management partners to ensure that ecosystem approaches are responsive to climate and environmental changes.

Draft Strategies:

- Evaluate flexibility of current management approaches to climate change impacts.
- Work with the broader Caribbean community to identify potential impacts to habitats and species distributions from climate change.

Social, Cultural and Economic Issues Goal: Draft Island-Specific Objectives and Strategies

PUERTO RICO

Objective 28: Promote the collection of social and economic data that informs management decisions.

Draft Strategies:

- Engage science partners, fishers, consumers, wholesalers/distributors and the SSC to identify and prioritize social and economic data gaps and research priorities for PR.
- Work w/Sea Grant to ensure social/economic research priorities are incorporated into funding opportunities.
- Use results from existing/completed studies (e.g., Hurricane Maria & COVID-19 assessments, MARFIN project) to inform future decisions.

Objective 29: Evaluate the social, cultural, and economic impacts of management decisions/actions across user groups.

Draft Strategies:

- Review and document the social/economic impacts of existing PR closed seasons and spawning areas on commercial, for-hire, and recreational stakeholders.
- Ensure that management measures address cultural differences across PR's fishing communities.
- Utilize online tools/social media to incorporate fisher and other stakeholder observations/experiences.
- Assess recreational fishing opportunity and satisfaction across PR communities.

Objective 30: Promote efforts that support social and economic opportunity and stability across sectors and fishing communities.

Draft Strategies:

- Support community efforts to improve fishing infrastructure across Puerto Rico.
- Support and promote development of a recruitment program for young fishers that encourages legal entry into the fishery.
- Consider management approaches that address recreational fishing opportunity and satisfaction.

Objective 31: Consider the impacts of enforcement and illegal fishing in Puerto Rico on economic opportunity and social well-being.

Draft Strategies:

- Collaborate with science partners to document the economic impact of illegal/unlicensed sales of fish in PR.
- Work with management partners to determine where additional enforcement could improve economic conditions and/or trust among user groups.

Social, Cultural and Economic Issues Goal: Draft Island-Specific Objectives and Strategies

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN

Objective 32: Promote the collection of social and economic data that informs management decisions.

Draft Strategies:

- Engage science partners and SSC to identify and prioritize social and economic data gaps and research priorities for STT/STJ
- Work w/SeaGrant to ensure social and economic research priorities are incorporated into funding opportunities.
- Identify/use results from existing/completed socioeconomic impact studies (e.g. Hurricanes Irma/Maria, COVID assessments).

Objective 33: Evaluate the social, cultural, and economic impacts of management decisions/actions across user groups.

Draft Strategies:

- Review and document the social and economic impacts of existing STT/STJ closed seasons and spawning areas on commercial, for-hire, and recreational stakeholders (Grammanik Bank).
- Ensure that management measures acknowledge and address differences across the fishing communities of STT and STJ.

Objective 34: Promote efforts that support social and economic opportunity and stability across sectors and fishing communities.

Draft Strategies:

- Support community efforts to improve fishing infrastructure across STT and STJ, including landing and market sites
- Develop education/outreach materials to support the use of social media and other virtual approaches to marketing locally caught species.
- Consider management approaches that address recreational fishing opportunity and satisfaction.

Objective 35: Consider the impacts of enforcement and illegal fishing St. Thomas and St. John on economic opportunity and social well-being.

Draft Strategies:

- Collaborate with science partners to document the economic impact of illegal/unlicensed sales of fish in STT-STJ.
- Work with management partners to determine where additional enforcement could improve economic conditions and/or trust among user groups.

Social, Cultural and Economic Issues Goal: Draft Island-Specific Objectives and Strategies

ST. CROIX

Objective 36: Promote the collection and dissemination of social and economic data to inform management decisions.

Draft Strategies:

- Engage science partners (SEFSC, academic researchers, Sea Grant, etc.) and SSC to identify and prioritize social and economic data gaps and research priorities for STX.
- Work w/Sea Grant to ensure social/economic research priorities are incorporated into funding opportunities • Identify/use results from existing/completed studies (e.g., Hurricanes Irma/Maria, COVID assessments).
- Ensure that new or existing social/economic science studies collaborate/coordinate with USVI DPNR.

Objective 37: Evaluate the social, cultural, and economic impacts of management decisions/actions across user groups.

Draft Strategies:

- Review and document the social/economic impacts of existing STX closed seasons and spawning areas on commercial, for-hire, and recreational stakeholders (Lang Bank).
- Ensure that management approaches provide equitable access for commercial and recreational resource users.
- Work with stakeholders to identify and address commercial and recreational user conflicts.

Objective 38: Consider the impacts of non-regulation, enforcement and illegal fishing in St. Croix on economic opportunity and social well-being.

Draft Strategies:

- Collaborate with science partners to document the economic impact of illegal/unlicensed sales of fish in STX.
- Work with management partners to determine where additional enforcement could improve economic conditions and/or trust among commercial and recreational user groups.

Communication and Outreach Goal: Draft Objectives and Strategies

Objective 39: Use a variety of communication tools that consider the social, cultural, and economic characteristics of target audiences in coordination with the OEAP.

Draft Strategies:

- Continue use of the Council's social media platforms and explore online and app-based technologies (e.g., WhatsApp, email templates) to convey information and updates.
- Develop a catalogue of communities, markets, businesses, and individuals with preferences and need for traditional media tools.
- Maintain the content and organization of the Council's website to enhance its utility to a variety of users.
- Ensure that communication and outreach materials account for stakeholder language preferences.
- Coordinate with management partners, commercial and recreational fishing organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and coastal businesses to expand the scope of Council communications across new and existing audiences.
- Consider sector-specific and "boat-friendly" communication materials.

Objective 40: Promote participation of a variety of stakeholders in the Council process.

Draft Strategies:

- Increase the frequency of Council communications in advance of meetings or events.
- Use a variety of traditional, online, and social media tools to advertise and remind stakeholders of Council meetings and events.
- Expand the use of webinars and conference lines to provide opportunities for remote access, participation, and education.
- Ensure that meetings and events are scheduled to encourage maximum participation.
- Consider development of issue-specific online comment forms to expand opportunities for public input.
- Conduct issue-specific workshops to promote collaborative development of management approaches.
- Develop a newsletter or summary to highlight Council meeting outcomes and anticipated actions.
- Expand/improve participation by new and young fishers in the Council process.

Objective 41: Improve public and stakeholder understanding and awareness of fisheries management, current issues, and the Council process.

Draft Strategies:

- Expand existing non-traditional stakeholder outreach efforts (restaurants, small-scale grocery store owners, and farmers, etc).
- Continue support of Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) workshops throughout the U.S. Caribbean.
- Develop island-specific (PR, STT/STJ, STX) outreach approaches and materials for recreational anglers and commercial fishers.
- Expand the role of fisheries liaisons to improve both fisher and public understanding of fisheries issues and the Council process.
- Coordinate with management and science partners to improve the clarity and simplicity of presentations to improve public understanding.
- Partner with other outreach organizations (e.g. PEPCO, Sea Grant) and federal agencies (USCG, NPS, etc.) and commercial and recreational fishing, diving, and boating organizations to develop and distribute educational materials to fishers, other marine resource users (e.g. divers), and the general public.
- Conduct in-person outreach and workshops to improve fisher and public engagement in the Council process.
- Explore partnerships with organizations to capture traditional ecological knowledge of U.S. Caribbean fishing communities.