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Process for Establishing Accountability Measures in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ

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August 30, 2023

District Advisory Panels Meeting



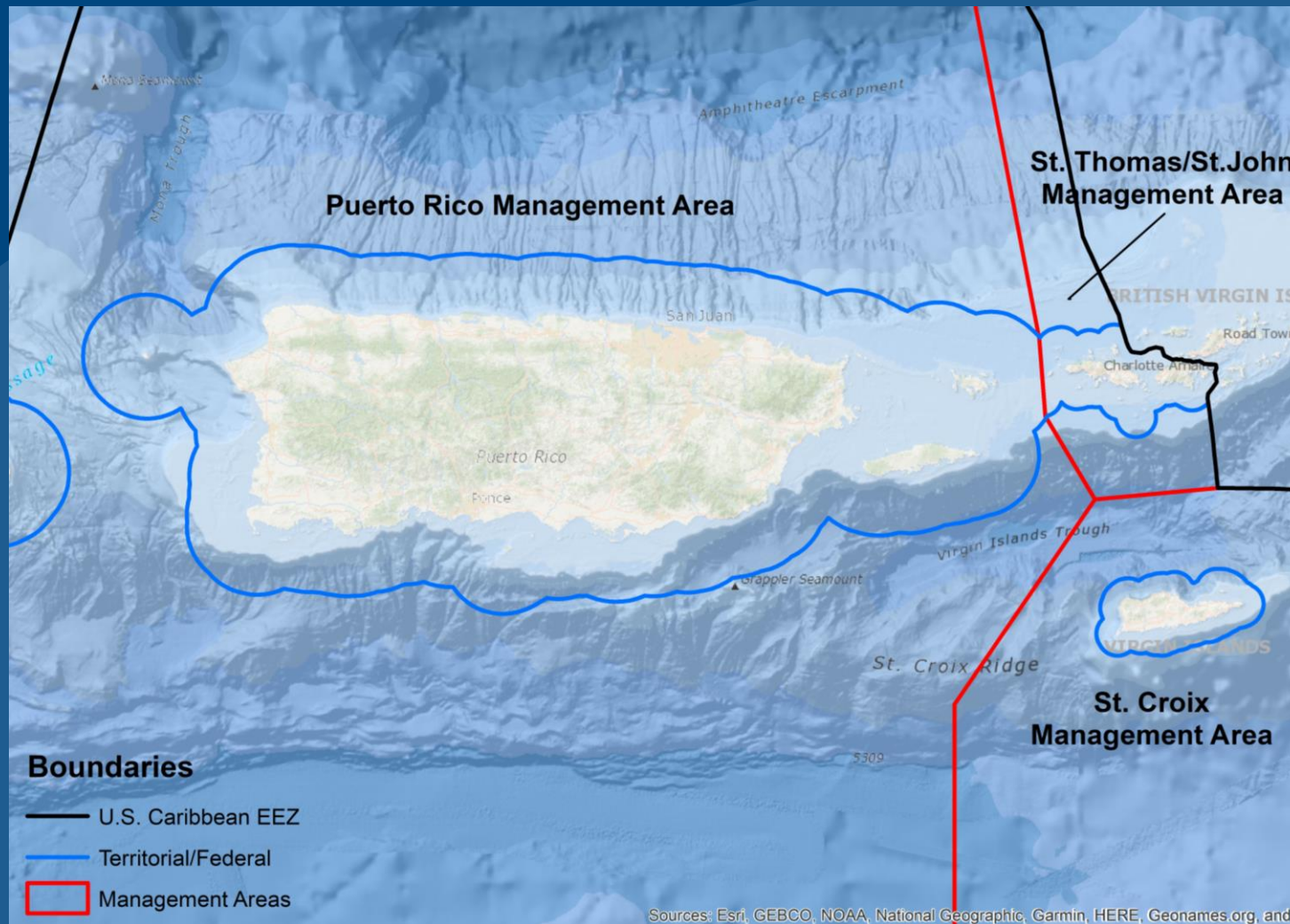
What are Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures and Why Do We Need Them?

- In 2007, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act was amended and required annual catch limits (ACLs) and accountability measures (AMs) be established for all species managed in fishery management plans (FMPs).
- For the U.S. Caribbean-wide FMPs (*no longer in effect*), ACLs and AMs were established in the 2010 and 2011 ACL Amendments.
- In 2022, the Island-based FMPs (*current FMPs*) revised ACLs and AMs for the species managed under each FMP.

Annual Catch Limits (ACL)

- An ACL is the amount of a fish that can be taken by fishermen over a one year period.
 - An ACL can apply to a single species (for example spiny lobster or yellowtail snapper) or a group of species (for example, Puerto Rico Snapper 2 - queen and cardinal snapper).
 - An ACL may be combined for the commercial and recreational sectors (for example spiny lobster) or separate ACLs can be set for each sector (for example Puerto Rico Reef Fish).
 - **In the U.S. Caribbean, ACLs are only applicable in federal waters.**

United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)



Federal Waters:

U.S. Virgin Islands: 3-200 nm

Puerto Rico: 9-200 nm

Federal Management:

Caribbean Fishery
Management Council
(CFMC)

NOAA Fisheries – Southeast
Regional Office

Territorial Management:

USVI – DPNR

Puerto Rico – DRNA

The CFMC manages fishery resources in federal waters through 3 Fishery Management Plans (FMP): Puerto Rico FMP, St. Croix FMP, and St Thomas and St. John FMP

Annual Catch Limits in the Puerto Rico, St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John FMPs

Puerto Rico

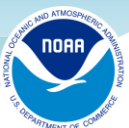
Reef Fish ACLs - set by sector

Pelagic ACLs - set by sector

Spiny Lobster ACL – combined for both sectors (all fishing)

St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John

Spiny Lobster, Reef Fish, and Pelagic ACLs
- combined for both sectors (all fishing)



What happens if an Annual Catch Limit is exceeded?

- If landings go over the ACL, the Council and NMFS must take action to make sure that the next years harvest stays at or below the ACL. This action is called an **accountability measure (AM)**.
- AMs are management measures designed to help prevent overfishing.
- AMs are required for Fishery Management Plans.

Accountability Measures in the Puerto Rico, St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John FMPs

- In-Season AM: queen conch in St. Croix.
- Post-Season AMs (set by category of species managed):
 - reef fish
 - pelagic fish (new to federal management)
 - spiny lobster
- Prohibited harvest closure:
 - corals, sea urchins, sea cucumbers
 - Nassau grouper, goliath grouper, blue parrotfish, midnight parrotfish, rainbow parrotfish
 - queen conch (Puerto Rico and St. Thomas/St. John)
 - giant manta ray, spotted eagle ray, southern stingray (Puerto Rico only)

Post-season AM process has 2 parts

Trigger

- Process for comparing landings to the annual catch limit or annual catch target.
- Considers if overage was due to enhanced reporting.

Application

- Process for determining how long a closure is needed.
- Describes when the closure would occur in the year, depending on number of days needed to close.

AM Trigger

Reef Fish

- An AM is triggered if landings exceed the ACL, unless NMFS finds that the overage was because data collection improved.
- Use specific years of landings:
 - the most recent single year of landings
 - the most recent single year of landings
 - the most recent 2-year average of landings
 - the most recent 3-year average of landings

Pelagic Fish

- Compares landings to an annual catch target (ACT*), which is equal to 90% of the ACL.
- Use specific years of landings:
 - the most recent single year of landings
 - the most recent single year of landings
 - the most recent 2-year average of landings
 - the most recent 3-year average of landings

Spiny Lobster

- An AM is triggered if landings exceed the ACL, unless NMFS finds that the overage was because data collection improved.
- Compares the most recent 3-year average landings to the average ACLs in place during those 3 years.

AM Application

Reef Fish

- If an AM needs to be applied, the length of the closure would be calculated starting from September 30 and going toward January.
- If January 1 - September 30 is not enough time to keep landings under the ACL, then additional days will be closed starting from October 1 and going toward the end of the year.

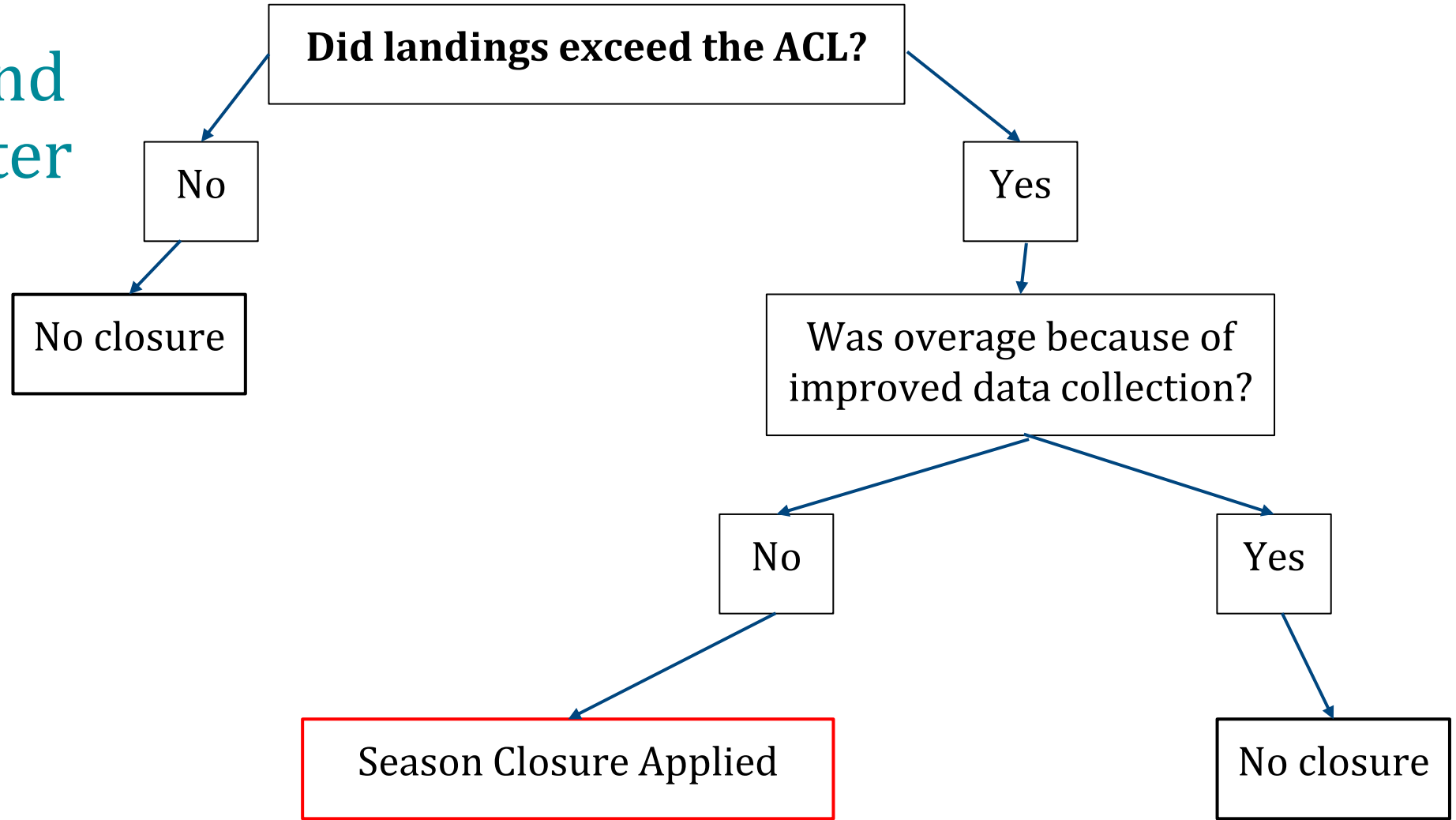
Pelagic Fish

- If landings exceed the ACT, the Council in consultation with the Science Center would decide if any corrective action is needed.

Spiny Lobster

- If an AM needs to be applied, the length of the closure would be calculated starting from September 30 and going toward January.
- If January 1 - September 30 is not enough time to keep landings under the ACL, then additional days will be closed starting from October 1 and going toward the end of the year.

Reef Fish and Spiny Lobster



Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
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Puerto Rico Sector-specific AMs

Reef Fish

- If landings for both sectors are available, then total landings (commercial + recreational) would be compared to the total ACL (commercial ACL + recreational ACL).
 - If the total ACL is exceeded, then the AM would be triggered* for the sector(s) that exceeded its ACL.
- If landings for one sector are not available, the ACL for the sector with available data would become the ACL for the stock/stock complex.
 - If landings exceed the ACL, the AM would be triggered* for all fishing.

* the AM would not be applied if the overage was because of improvements in data collection/monitoring

Puerto Rico Sector-specific AMs

Reef Fish Example

Landings Available for Both Sectors

Sector	ACL	Landings	AM Triggered?	Landings	AM Triggered?	Landings	AM Triggered?
Commercial	100,000	125,000	No	100,000	No	125,000	Yes
Recreational	50,000	15,000	No	55,000	Yes	55,000	Yes
Total	150,000	140,000		155,000		180,000	

Landings Available for One Sector

Sector	ACL	Landings	AM Triggered?
Commercial	100,000	125,000	Yes
Recreational	50,000	No data collection	Yes
Total	100,000	125,000	



Puerto Rico Sector-specific AMs

Pelagic Fish

- If landings for both sectors are available, landings for each sector would be compared to the sector-specific ACT.
 - If a sector's landings exceed its ACT, the AM would be triggered** for the sector.
- If landings for one sector are not available, the ACT for the sector with available data would become the ACT for the stock/stock complex.
 - If landings exceed the ACT, the AM would be triggered** for all fishing.

** If an AM is triggered, the Council in consultation with the Science Center would assess whether corrective action is needed.

Spiny Lobster Example – St. Thomas

Year	ACL	Proposed ACL	Landings	3-years used in AM process (2-year data lag)	3-year average ACLs	3-year average landings	AM Triggered	AM Closure Period (average landings compared to current ACL)
2019	104,199		98,608					
2020	104,199		94,328					
2021	104,199		99,174					
2022	209,210							
2023	142,636			2019-2021	104,199	97,370	No	
2024	126,089	133,207		2020-2022	139,203			Compare to 126,089 or 133,207 if final rule in place
2025	126,089	133,207		2021-2023	152,015			Compare to 126,089 or 133,207 if final rule in place
2026	126,089	133,207		2022-2024	159,312			Compare to 126,089 or 133,207 if final rule in place

For more information please contact:
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¡Muchas gracias por su atención!

Additional Slides

Example: Calculating the Length of the AM-based Closure

Month	# Days	Landings	Daily Rate
Jan	31	181,300	5,848
Feb	28	160,100	5,718
Mar	31	82,600	2,665
Apr	30	184,500	6,150
May	31	124,400	4,013
Jun	30	138,400	4,613
Jul	31	173,600	5,600
Aug	31	151,600	4,890
Sep	30	108,200	3,607
Oct	31	226,700	7,313
Nov	30	206,000	6,867
Dec	31	195,500	6,306

This is an made up example for a fish with monthly landings shown in the table on the left.

The daily rate (lbs/day) is calculated by dividing the monthly total by the number of days in that month.

Pretend the ACL for the fish was exceeded by 20,000 pounds.

Starting with Sept 30 and working towards Jan. 1, the running total harvest (table on the right) would be calculated.

When the running total hits 20,000, that day would be the start of the closure period.

For this example, the season would be closed from Sept 25-30, in federal waters.

Day	Pounds
30-Sep	3,607
29-Sep	7,213
28-Sep	10,820
27-Sep	14,427
26-Sep	18,033
25-Sep	21,640
24-Sep	25,247
23-Sep	28,853

Spiny Lobster Example – Puerto Rico

Year	ACL	Proposed ACL	Landings	3-years used in AM process (2-year data lag)	3-year average ACLs	3-year average landings	AM Triggered	AM Closure Period (average landings compared to current ACL)
2019	327,920		489,243					
2020	327,920							
2021	327,920							
2022	527,232							
2023	369,313			2019-2021	327,920		Yes*	489,243 compared to 369,313
2024	366,965	357,629		2020-2022	394,357			Compare to 366,965 or 357,629 (if final rule in place)
2025	366,965	357,629		2021-2023	408,155			Compare to 366,965 or 357,629 (if final rule in place)
2026	366,965	357,629		2022-2024	421,170			Compare to 366,965 or 357,629 (if final rule in place)

* Framework Amendment 1 became effective April 15, 2023. The 2023 annual monitoring for spiny lobster used the AM process described in the Puerto Rico FMP – compare 2019 landings to ACL from FMP).