

Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Meeting

April 9-11, 2024

Rainbow Runner Discussion

Following discussion at the December 2023 meeting, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council) is tasking the SSC with evaluating the need to revisit annual catch limits (ACL) for rainbow runner (see discussion outlined below with the main concern being that the commercial ACL may be too low), specifically, if there is any new information to consider for the species that would help in respecifying ACLs. At this time, there is no recreational data available to compare to the recreational ACL, and thus the commercial ACL is the ACL for the rainbow runner stock in Puerto Rico.

Actions to Date Specific to Rainbow Runner

- April 2023 Council Meeting:
 - Puerto Rico District Advisory Panel (DAP) requested reclassification from a Reef Fish species to a Pelagic Fish species under the Puerto Rico Fishery Management Plan (FMP), based on the life history of and fishing methods for the species.
 - SSC was tasked to review information and make a recommendation to the Council.
- May 2023 SSC meeting:
 - SSC reviewed background information and determined a reclassification was warranted.
- August 2023 Council meeting:
 - SSC recommended the Council reclassify the rainbow runner as a pelagic species under the FMP.
 - Council tasked staff to develop an amendment to reclassify the species.
- December 2023 Council meeting:
 - [Presentation](#) of management changes that would occur if rainbow runner reclassified as a pelagic fish (e.g., removal from recreational bag limit, Bajo de Sico seasonal closure, Reef Fish accountability measures [AMs]).
 - Concerns that the current commercial ACL for rainbow runner is too low.
 - Although the species is primarily targeted by the recreational sector, a statement during this meeting indicated that “100s of pounds of rainbow runner are harvested per trip by select commercial fishermen even though it is not a targeted species” (*Could these have been reported as Jacks? On current catch report form, rainbow runner is an add-on species*);
 - If the species is moved to a pelagic fish, what would happen if the commercial sector increases catch of the species (e.g, would it increase chances of exceeding their ACL and annual catch target [ACT]? How would the AMs as a pelagic species act to prevent an exceedance if there is no set action corresponding when the ACT is exceeded? Would that change in management show in the data?).

SSC Discussion

Question 1 - (a) Is there a need to revisit ACLs (commercial and/or recreational) for the species? YES

(b) Is there any new landings information available for the species that would be helpful to respecify rainbow runner ACLs?

Grisel - sampling of rec harvest only 59 fish measured in 2013-2014; tournament data 2000-2023 9 fish sampled? FADs? Wess Merten or Kelvin Serrano DNER data?

Process Under Puerto Rico FMP	Notes
Rainbow runner was not listed on Puerto Rico commercial catch form (i.e., fishers typically either lump landings of rainbow runner under the Jacks catch-all category or add as a write-in species). See Appendix A for more info.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Add-on species, so very low species-specific landings reported. ● Bycatch not reported.
Years of commercial landings used to set commercial ACL: 1988- 2016 (excluding 2005) Commercial ACL = 913 lbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete (paper form only) landings available for management through 2019. ● E-reported landings started in 2020, but are not available for management yet. ● In the app, rainbow runner is available for reporting landings under Other Species.
Years of recreational landings used to set recreational ACL: 2000-2016 Recreational ACL = 8,091 lbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MRIP program discontinued in 2017 and not restarted to date. ● Commercial ACL applies for all harvest (see AM description above).

Note: For ACL monitoring under the Puerto Rico FMP in calendar year 2023, commercial landings from year 2019 (the most recent available for management; Appendix A) were used. The ACL was not exceeded and no AM was triggered or applied. ACL monitoring in calendar year 2024 has not occurred yet, as the Southeast Regional Office is waiting on more recent landings.

For consideration

- What data would be needed to update the commercial ACL? What time period of landings would be used/needed? Should the same process described in the FMP (i.e., include some % of Jacks catch-all, use the 75th percentile of landings, apply the same scalar and buffer) be used?
- Should the Council send a request to the Puerto Rico DNER to add rainbow runner to the Commercial Catch Report form? YES SSC
- Should a total ACL only (no sector ACLs) be set for the species (because no recreational landings are available)? If so, what data would that be based on? Would this also apply to the other stocks/complexes managed with sector-specific ACLs?

Michelle - lump the ACLs

Question 2 - If the ACT (proposed) for rainbow runner is exceeded in a given year, what accountability measure action, if any, should NMFS and the Council consider?

Reef Fish AM Process	Pelagic Fish AM Process
<p>Compare commercial landings of rainbow runner to the commercial ACL.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> If landings do not exceed the ACL, then no AM triggered. If landings exceed the ACL, were those increased landings due to enhanced reporting? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> If yes, then no AM triggered. If no, then landings due to increased catch, and AM triggered. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> If AM triggered, then NMFS estimates the number of closure days needed in order to not exceed the ACL again during the current fishing year. 	<p>Compare commercial landings of rainbow runner to the commercial ACT.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> If landings do not exceed the ACT, then no AM triggered. If landings exceed the ACT, NMFS in consultation with the Council will determine appropriate corrective action.* <p>* Corrective action could include actions such as fishing season reductions or modifications to the ACL and would depend on many factors, including an evaluation of the cause of the exceedance and the best way to protect against future ACL and ACT exceedances.</p>

- In the amendment to be developed, the ACT would be equal to 90% of the ACL (proposed commercial ACT = 822 lbs and proposed recreational ACT = 7,282 lbs).
- How to address the concern about not having a specific AM action to prevent an ACT exceedance in the future (as opposed to the AM-based closure for Reef Fish).

Appendix A. Background Information Relevant to Rainbow Runner or Jacks

Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

- Established in [1985](#) and discontinued in 2022.
- Seven species in the Jacks unit: blue runner, horse eye jack, black jack, almaco jack, bar jack, greater amberjack, and yellow jack.
- Annual catch limits (ACL) set for the Jacks unit (2012 [Amendment 6](#)): commercial ACL of 86,059 pounds (lbs); recreational ACL of 51,001 lbs.
- Aggregate recreational bag limit for several species including **jacks** (2012 [Amendment 6](#)): 5 per person per day or, if 3 or more persons are aboard, 15 per vessel per day, but not to exceed 1 surgeonfish per person per day or 4 surgeonfish per vessel per day.
- Accountability measures (AM) set for Reef Fish (2012 [Amendment 6](#)) and revised (2018 [Regulatory Amendment 6](#)) to only be triggered when both the sector ACL (recreational or commercial) and the total ACL are exceeded.

[Puerto Rico FMP](#)

- Implemented in 2022, transitioned management of federal fisheries to an island-based approach.
- Previously managed jack species excluded from management because they infrequently occur in federal waters.
- Added three new jack species to the FMP (crevalle, African pompano, rainbow runner) due to their economic importance and/or their importance as bycatch.
 - Managed as three individual stocks based on fishing methods and life history (SSC March 2016 transcript, pg 200-204; confirmed SSC Fec. 2017 transcript, pg 281 and SSC July 2018 transcript, pg 215-220).
- Majority of species-specific landings were from recreational data; the commercial catch forms did not list these 3 species (SSC Fec. 2017 transcript, pg 277).
 - Reference years and process used to set ACLs is described in Appendix G: commercial landings 1988-2016 (excluded 2005); recreational landings 2000-2016 (Tables G3 & G4).
 - For the commercial sector, the majority of landings were reported as Jacks. The SSC decided to proportionally partition the unspecified landings to get the species-specific reference points (SSC Feb-Mar. 2018, pg 122-123).
 - **Rainbow runner commercial ACL = 913 lbs**
 - **Rainbow runner recreational ACL = 8,091 lbs**
- AMs set by Functional Group: Reef Fish, Spiny Lobster, Pelagic Fish
 - All three Jack stocks were listed under the Reef Fish group.
 - Reef Fish AM: each year, landings will be evaluated relative to the ACL based on a moving multi-year average, described in the FMP. **When landings for one sector are not available for comparison to that sector's ACL, the ACL for the sector with available landings is the applicable ACL for the stock.**
 - Pelagic Fish AM: each year, landings will be evaluated relative to the annual catch target (ACT) based on a moving multi-year average, described in the FMP. **When landings for**

one sector are not available for comparison to that sector's ACL and ACT, the ACL and ACT for the sector with available landings is the applicable ACL and ACT for the stock. If NMFS estimates that landings have exceeded the applicable ACT, NMFS in consultation with the Council will determine appropriate corrective action.

- Recreational bag limits were revised for Reef Fish and include the 3 new jack species. The number per day or per vessel did not change.

Commercial and recreational landings of Jacks (unspecified) and Rainbow Runner in Puerto Rico.

Year	Unspecified Jacks Commercial Landings (lbs)	Rainbow Runner Commercial Landings (lbs)	Rainbow Runner Recreational Landings (lbs)
1988	43,689	1,095	-
1989	57,280	1,137	-
1990	43,292	847	-
1991	67,478	700	-
1992	38,040	503	-
1993	47,705	477	-
1994	60,927	222	-
1995	74,579	179	-
1996	68,282	2,735	-
1997	71,018	223	-
1998	41,741	188	-
1999	34,678	50	-
2000	50,475	81	188
2001	49,944	176	188
2002	32,677	117	-
2003	43,527	569	1,754
2004	27,893	-	8,517
2005	-	-	14,302
2006	20,039	Conf	-
2007	10,233	-	65
2008	31,603	-	16,100
2009	23,674	-	-
2010	14,783	-	462
2011	3,940	-	431
2012	5,826	Conf	442
2013	5,809	-	1,094
2014	4,463	57	-
2015	5,001	Conf	44,267
2016	5,005	Conf	4,408
2017	4,370	Conf	-
2018	4,699	-	-
2019	17,022	Conf	-

Note: Electronic reporting of commercial catch started in 2020. Efforts are underway consolidate data to a single platform that would be available for management use.