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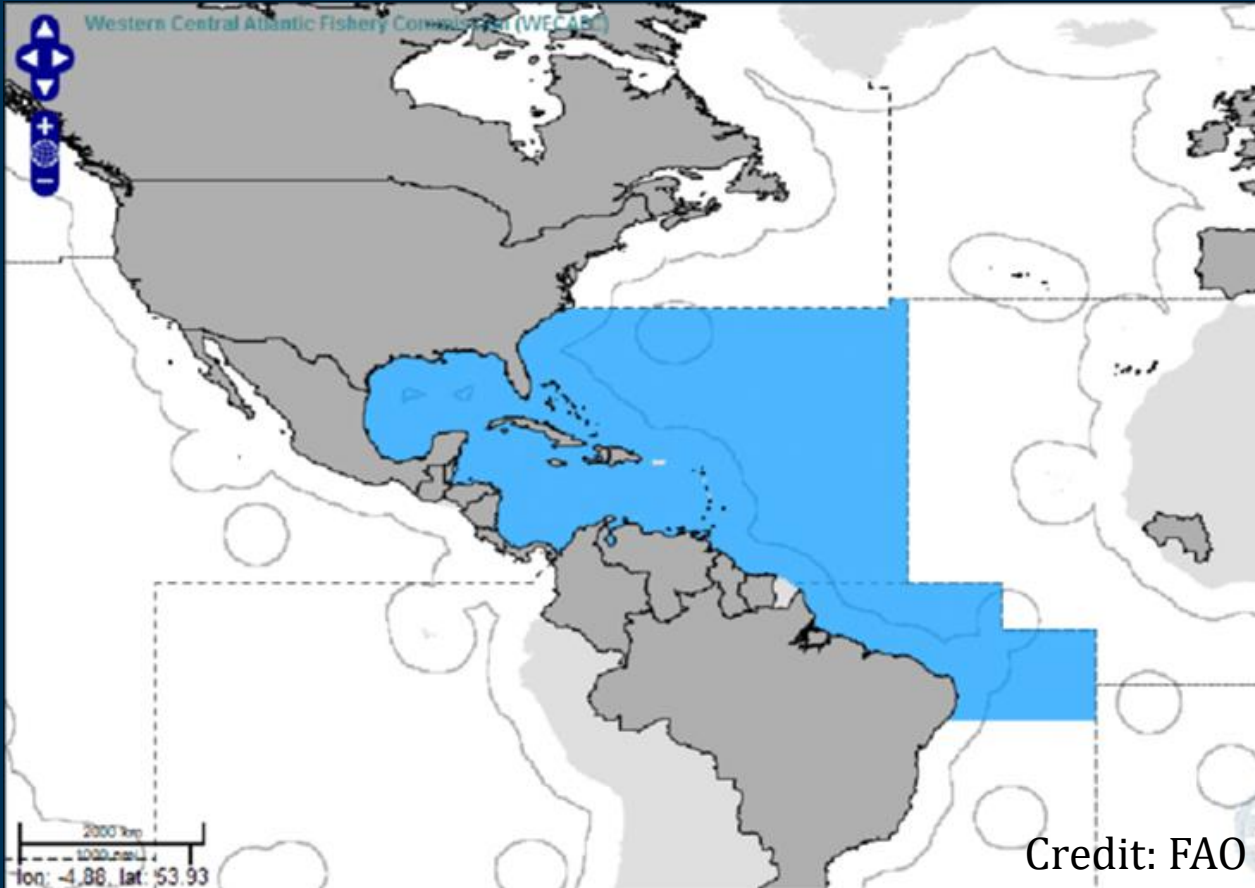
Update on the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC): Spawning Aggregation and Queen Conch Working Group Meetings

*Caribbean Fishery Management Council Meeting
April 18, 2023*

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WECAFC



- **Regional fisheries body**
- **Acts in advisory capacity for conservation and management of all living marine resources in the Wider Caribbean**
- **Comprised of 34 Members, including USA**

Overview



- **WECAFC Spawning Aggregations Working Group (SAWG)**
- **Key Outcomes – SAWG Meeting (14-15 March 2023)**
- **WECAFC Queen Conch Working Group (QCWG)**
- **Key Outcomes – QCWG Meeting (16 March 2023)**
- **Other Updates of Interest**



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WECAFC Spawning Aggregations Working Group

- Established in 2012
- Joint working group – WECAFC, CFMC, OSPESCA, CRFM
- Communications Strategy – endorsed in 2019
- *Regional Fish Spawning Aggregation Fishery Management Plan* – endorsed in 2022
 - Focus on Nassau grouper and mutton snapper
- Active U.S. participation – CFMC/NOAA Fisheries



Nassau grouper. Credit: Paddy Ryan



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Key Outcomes – SAWG Meeting (14-15 March 2023)



- Hosted by CFMC with support of NOAA Fisheries
- Reviewed implementation of *Regional Fish Spawning Aggregation Fishery Management Plan*
 - Identified needs – increased awareness of plan, knowledge of FSA sites, and protective measures
- Updated on “Big Fish” – two-year, trilingual public campaign
 - August 2023 launch with one-hour film release
 - Short films, podcasts, radio kits, PSAs, booklets, posters, digital platform
 - Target – fishers, decision makers, general public

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/saving-nassau-grouper-protecting-spawning-aggregations>

Key Outcomes – SAWG Meeting (14-15 March 2023)

- **Work Plan updated**
- **Recommendations developed for WECAFC19:**
 - **Establishment of a FSA Coordination Committee**
 - **Prioritization of Nassau grouper and mutton snapper for data collection and reporting**
 - **Use of descending devices as best practice for fish release consistent with U.S. policy**



WECAFC Queen Conch Working Group

- Created in 2012
- Joint working group – WECAFC, CFMC, OSPESCA, CRFM, CITES
- *Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan* – endorsed in 2016
- Queen Conch Statistical Scientific and Technical Advisory Group established
- Tools to promote CITES implementation, sustainable fisheries management, and improved trade monitoring
- Active U.S. participation – CFMC/NOAA Fisheries



Key Outcomes – QCWG Meeting (16 March 2023)

- Reviewed implementation of *Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan*
- Identified needs:
 - Improved landings data
 - Enhanced understanding of domestic consumption
 - Development of non-detriment findings (CITES)
- Received CITES updates (CoP19 Decisions)
- Pilot project in Jamaica discussed



Key Outcomes – QCWG Meeting (16 March 2023)

- **Work Plan updated**
- **Recommendations developed for WECAFC19:**
 - **Improve reporting of landings data by processing grades with application of conversion factors**
 - **Advance development of a genetic toolkit to trace illegal queen conch in trade**
 - **Improve socio-economic data on local consumption and trade**
 - **Consider climate change impacts on queen conch resources**



Other Updates of Interest



- **Moored FAD Working Group Meeting – April 17-19, 2023**
- **WECAFC19 Meeting – September 6-8, 2023**
- **Flyingfish-Dolphinfish Working Group Meeting – June 2024**

Thank you for your attention!



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