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FISHERIES

2023 Accountability Measures

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181st Caribbean Fishery Management Council Meeting

April 18-19, 2023

Ponce, Puerto Rico



Annual Catch Limit Monitoring Process under the Island-based Fishery Management Plans (regulations as of 10/13/2022)

- At the beginning of the year, landings for each stock, stock complex, or indicator stock are compared to the ACL (Reef Fish and Spiny Lobster*) or ACT (Pelagics) based on a sequence of landings.
 - 1st year of FMP implementation (2023) – most recent single year of landings
 - 2nd year of FMP implementation (2024) – most recent single year of landings
 - 3rd year of FMP implementation (2025) – average of most recent 2 years of landings
 - 4th year of FMP implementation (2026) and thereafter – average of most recent 3 years of landings

* Framework Amendment 1, effective 4/15/2023, revised the AM to use the 3-year average landings for spiny lobster.

- At the beginning of 2023, the most recent year of commercial landings available:

Puerto Rico = 2019

USVI = 2021

- Additionally, recreational data are not available: for all islands, the commercial ACL = stock ACL (any required closure would apply to all fishing for the stock/complex)



Accountability Measures for Reef Fish and Spiny Lobster

- If NMFS estimates that landings exceeded the ACL, the length of the fishing season will be reduced by the amount necessary to prevent landings from exceeding the ACL in the current year.
 - The AM is **not applied** if NMFS determines that a fishing season reduction is not necessary based on the best scientific information available.
 - The AM is **not applied** if the NMFS determines data collection or monitoring efforts improved.
- Any fishing season reduction will be applied starting from September 30 and moving earlier toward the beginning of the fishing year. If the length of the required fishing season reduction exceeds the time period of January 1 through September 30, any additional fishing season reduction will be applied starting from October 1 and moving later toward the end of the fishing year.

Source 50 CFR 622.440(c)(2); 50 CFR 622.480(c)(2); 50 CFR 622.515(c)(2)



Accountability Measures for Pelagic Species

- For each stock/complex, the **annual catch target** is equal to 90% of the ACL.
- At or near the beginning the fishing year, landings for the Pelagic stock or stock complex will be evaluated relative to its ACT based on a moving multi-year average of landings, as described in the FMP (see slide 2).
- If landings exceed the ACT, NMFS in consultation with the Caribbean Fishery Management Council will determine appropriate corrective action.

Source: 50 CFR 622.440(b)(7); 50 CFR 622.480(b)(3); 50 CFR 622.515(b)(3)



Transition from Reef Fish and Spiny Lobster FMPs to Island-based FMPs

- Landings data for Puerto Rico and the USVI generally are not available for comparison to the ACLs or ACTs until 1 to 2 years after the year in which the fishing activity occurred.
- During the first few years of implementation under the Island-based FMPs, the available landings would be from the previous management regime (i.e., management under the Reef Fish and Spiny Lobster FMPs; replaced in Oct. 2022).
- During this transition period, NMFS would evaluate if the available landings **would exceed** the ACLs or ACTs set under the Island-based FMPs.
- Once the available landings are from years when the Island-based FMPs were in place (i.e., 2023 and later), NMFS would evaluate if the landings **exceeded** the ACLs or ACTs set under the island-based FMPs.
- In both cases, if the overage was determined to be from increased catch, the AM would be applied as described on the previous two slides.



NMFS review of stocks/complexes with landings that exceeded the ACL or ACT for 2023

FMP	Stock/Complex	Landings (lbs)	ACL (lbs)	ACT (lbs)	Reason for Overage (SEFSC)	Closure Applied?
Puerto Rico	Cubera snapper (Snapper 6)	7,266	119	N/A	Improved Reporting	No
	Great barracuda	1,916	495	445	Needs further evaluation	No
	Queen conch	203,640	0	N/A	Increased Catch	No; harvest prohibited
	Southern stingray (Rays 3)	2,243	0	N/A	Increased Catch	No; harvest prohibited
St. Croix	Black, red, tiger, yellowfin grouper (Grouper 5)	1,344	701	N/A	Improved Reporting	No
	Misty grouper (Grouper 6)	120	77	N/A	Improved Reporting	No
St. Thomas/ St. John	Black, red, tiger, yellowfin grouper (Grouper 4)	5,915	2,254	N/A	Improved Reporting	No
	Hogfish	3,117	2,951	N/A	Improved Reporting	No
	Queen conch	298	0	N/A	Increased Catch	No; harvest prohibited
	Nassau grouper	3,117	0	N/A	Increased Catch	No; harvest prohibited

Improved Reporting

For Hogfish and Grouper 4 (STT/STJ), Grouper 5 and Misty grouper (STX), and Cubera snapper (PR) the improved reporting was determined because the species were not on the reporting forms during the period used to set the ACLs (see table below).

For Great Barracuda (PR), more investigation is required to understand the reporting dynamics of the fishery. The reporting forms only have the general category of “barracuda.” Great Barracuda is a pelagic stock managed under an ACT. If the ACT is exceeded, NMFS must consult with the Caribbean Fishery Management Council to determine appropriate corrective action.

Stock/Complex	Reference Period for ACL	Year added to Report Form
Hogfish	2012-2016	2016
Red, black, tiger, yellowfin grouper (STT/STJ G4 and STX G5)	2012-2016 species-specific ratio applied to 2000-2010 “Groupers” aggregate landings	Black, red, tiger grouper added in 2016
Misty grouper		2011; species-specific ratio likely inaccurate
Cubera snapper	1988-2004, 2006-2011	2014

Next Steps

- Revisit ACLs for those stocks/complexes that include species that were not on the reporting forms during the period used to set ACLs.
- Start discussion to determine appropriate corrective actions, if any, for ACT overages for pelagic stocks.



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