



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

July 2, 2026

Miguel Rolón
Executive Director
Caribbean Fishery Management Council
miguel_rolon_cfmc@yahoo.com

Dear Mr. Rolón:

Thank you for the Caribbean Fishery Management Council's (Council) work regarding Executive Order 14276, Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, including your detailed action plan outlining priorities, and your extensive stakeholder engagement. I deeply appreciate the Council's partnership and the thorough analysis provided by the Council members, your expert staff and industry advisors. The volume of input from fishery participants and coastal communities received in public comments highlights the urgency of our shared mission. I intimately understand the unique data collection challenges, infrastructural needs, and cultural dynamics present in the U.S. Caribbean. I am fully committed to assisting you in reducing loss of yield, unburdening your local fishermen, and significantly increasing economic returns to the islands. In particular, I want to acknowledge and commend the Council for already integrating several of these priority actions directly into your current action plans. To fulfill the EO's mandate to reduce burdens on domestic fishing, increase production, stabilize markets, improve access, and enhance economic profitability, I request the Council maintain momentum on these key issues and focus on the following priorities during upcoming prioritization and action planning processes:

- **Shift Spiny Lobster and Queen Conch to Territorial Management:** Island based Federal management of these highly localized species is often data-poor, leading to restrictive, precautionary Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) that truncate fishing seasons. I strongly encourage you to evaluate shifting Caribbean Spiny Lobster and Queen Conch to territorial management. Empowering local economies and territorial agencies to manage these stocks will maximize yield, reduce costly federal regulation, and align with the core intent of EO 14276. I understand there is an ongoing status review of Queen Conch, and I expect the Council to use the outcome of that effort to inform its evaluation of who should manage the fishery, including determining if the Queen Conch rebuilding plan is still necessary.
- **Revise Accountability Measures (AMs) for Pelagic Stocks and Spiny Lobster:** Pelagic stocks in the region are highly seasonal, and federal AMs frequently disrupt markets and community income. Similarly, the AMs for spiny lobster continue to cause fishery closures due to environmentally driven factors. As the Council evaluates moving spiny lobster to territorial management, I request the Council advance regulatory amendments to revise these AMs, incorporating regional seasonality to stabilize local seafood markets and prevent unnecessary socioeconomic disruptions.
- **Review Effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs; e.g., Tourmaline Bank and Abrir La Sierra):** To expand fishing access and align with the EO's intent to reopen areas no longer serving active conservation needs, I urge the Council to expedite this priority and evaluate a regulatory amendment to reopen specific MPAs—such as Tourmaline Bank—to commercial fishing, provided that upcoming scientific reviews demonstrate these areas are no longer functioning as active spawning aggregation sites.
- **State-Federal Regulatory Compatibility Review:** Conflicting territorial and federal regulations confuse fishermen and complicate compliance. I request the Council to expedite its regulatory



compatibility review to strike unnecessary redundancies and create one coherent set of rules, thereby improving access and enhancing regulatory compliance.

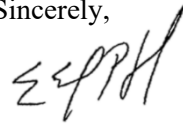
Strategic EO 14276 Mandates for Council Consideration:

To further optimize regional management, I urge the Council to systematically assess current FMPs and consider removing species that no longer require conservation and management. Where species are not in need of conservation and management but including them in the FMP would help achieve ecosystem management objectives, I encourage the Council to consider redesignating them as Ecosystem Component (EC) species. Finally, as stated in the Seafood EO, I strongly encourage the Council to collaborate with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on the expanded and continued use of Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) as agile management tools to test gear innovations, enhance value-added quality, and safely increase domestic production.

In some instances, the priorities identified above may implicate other statutory requirements. Where that applies, NMFS will work with the Council to determine how best to advance an action. Complementing your efforts, NMFS is concurrently evaluating internal actions to support these initiatives and your priorities. This includes reestablishing robust recreational data collection in the U.S. Caribbean, prioritizing socio-economic data needs for decision-making, and enforcing import regulations to ensure illegal foreign imports do not undercut the price of domestic Spiny Lobster and Queen Conch. We also acknowledge the concerns regarding shark and marine mammal depredation on target catch. To address this issue, we are prioritizing additional research, including the development of deterrents, enhanced data collection, and management adjustments to increase flexibility for U.S. shark fisheries.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to the Caribbean's fishing communities. I look forward to advancing these vital reforms together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Piñeiro Soler', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eugenio Piñeiro Soler
Assistant Administrator
for Fisheries