Evaluation of Managed Stocks

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Proposed Actions & Rationale

Proposed Actions

Refine Managed Species List

Refine the list of federally-managed species to include only those that are in need of conservation and management.

Reclassify or Remove

For those not in need of conservation and management, reclassify species that can achieve ecosystem management objectives or remove them from the fishery management plan.

Why This is Needed

Improve Efficiency

To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of federal fisheries management in the U.S. Caribbean.

Align with Ecological Needs

Some species managed in the fishery management plans are not targeted by fishermen, but were included because of their ecosystem role. These species may be better suited as **ecosystem component species**, which do not require active management.

What does this mean?

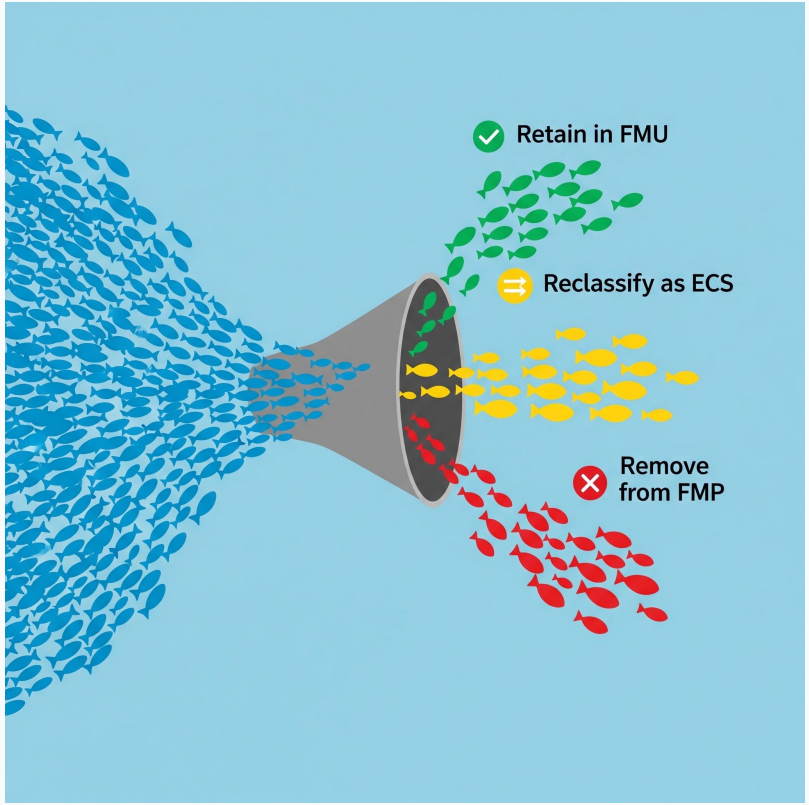
Develop a process that systematically evaluates which species should be included in the fishery management plan and actively managed (in the fishery management unit or FMU).

Retain in FMU — Require Management
Keep species that are overfished or experiencing overfishing or could become so in the future.

Retain in FMU — Council Choice
Keep species the Council considers would benefit from federal management (e.g., spawning occurs in federal waters).

Reclassify as ECS — Ecologically Important
Keep in the FMP, but remove from active management, species vital to managed fish or the ecosystem (e.g., corals, herbivores, prey).

Remove from FMP — Ineffective Management
Remove species adequately managed by territories and/or where federal management is ineffective (e.g., species primarily caught in territorial waters).



How will this be accomplished?

01

Analyze Landings Data

Take a first look using recent commercial landings data to distinguish between directed catch and incidental catch.

- **Spatial Catch Analysis:** Estimate the percentage of landings reported from federal waters to determine if federal regulations will be effective.
- **Range of Options:** Consider management approaches ranging from retaining many species to retaining few species.

02

Apply Decision Tree Steps

Systematically evaluate all species excluded during Step 1 to determine if they should be kept in the Fishery Management Plan.

- **FMU Classification:** Retain species to be managed actively (annual catch limit).
- **ECS Classification:** Reclassify species as Ecosystem Component Species to keep in the FMP but that are not managed with target limits.

What is needed from the Council today?

01

Catch Thresholds

Input on the threshold used as the cut off between directed catch and incidental catch.

02

Proposed Options

Input on the range of proposed options based on landings data.

Can any be removed from consideration, or combined with another?

03

Decision Tree Steps

Input on steps to be applied to the list of species not retained after the first cut.

Are there any considerations that are missing?

Focus on process, not results.

Fishery Management Unit (FMU) Evaluation

Step 1 - Use Available Landings to Sort Species

01

Average Landings

Used average commercial landings from 2020-2024.

Additionally, for Puerto Rico, used average recreational landings from 2000-2016.

02

Spatial Categories

Categorized by the percentage of landings reported from federal waters:

Minimum: 5% or less

Low: 5% – 25%

Medium: 25% – 50%

High: 50% – 75%

Maximum: 75% – 100%

03

Catch Thresholds

Preliminarily selected a ***de minimis***[1] threshold based on median landings to separate directed catch from incidental catch.

PR (com.+rec.) = 8,500

STX = 2,500

STT/STJ = 2,000

04

Risk Assessment

Assigned risk levels based on Council's SSC susceptibility scores[2]:

High Risk: 2.5 – 3.0
Moderate-to-high / High

Moderate Risk: 1.5 – 2.0
Low-to-moderate / Moderate

Low Risk: 1.0
Low susceptibility

[1] De minimis is something that is very small or of little importance.

[2] Susceptibility scores for each species were assigned by the SSC during development of the island-based Fishery Management Plans, which were completed in 2019. Some scores were combined for the Risk category for this analysis.

Puerto Rico species with total (commercial + recreational) average landings **greater than** the preliminary de minimis value, grouped by *Risk* and *Spatial* categories.

Location	High Risk (2.5-3.0)	Moderate Risk (1.5-2.0)	Low Risk (1.0)
State (< 5% from federal waters)	Southern stingray, Spotted eagle ray	Crevalle jack, Dog snapper, Lane snapper	Stoplight parrotfish, Cero mackerel
Low (5-25% from federal waters)	Queen conch, Goliath grouper, Yellowfin grouper, Rainbow parrotfish	**Coney**, **Red hind**, Spiny lobster, **Mutton snapper**, Vermilion snapper, Yellowtail snapper, Cubera snapper, **Queen triggerfish**, Hogfish	Great barracuda, Little tunny, King mackerel
Medium (25-50% from federal waters)	None	Blackfin snapper, **Silk snapper**, Cardinal snapper, **Queen snapper**	Blackfin tuna
High (50-75% from federal waters)	None	None	**Dolphin**, Tripletail, Wahoo
Max (75-100% from federal waters)	None	None	None

Bold = indicator species. Red = Ad Hoc committee recommended removing. All results are preliminary.

Puerto Rico species with total (commercial + recreational) average landings **less than** the preliminary de minimis value, grouped by *Risk* and *Spatial* categories.

Location	High Risk (2.5-3.0)	Moderate Risk (1.5-2.0)	Low Risk (1.0)
No landings reported	Corals, Sea cucumbers, Sea urchins, Yellowmouth grouper, Giant manta ray	None	Queen angelfish
State (< 5% from federal waters)	Black grouper, Midnight parrotfish,	White grunt, Schoolmaster	Gray angelfish, French angelfish, Pompano dolphin, Queen parrotfish, Redtail parrotfish, Redband parrotfish, Striped parrotfish, Blue tang, Ocean surgeonfish, Puddingwife
Low (5-25% from federal waters)	Nassau grouper, Blue parrotfish	Black snapper, Wenchman	Graysby, Rock hind, Rainbow runner, Princess parrotfish, Doctorfish, Gray triggerfish, Ocean triggerfish, Spanish hogfish
Medium (25-50% from federal waters)	None	Misty grouper	African pompano
High (50-75% from federal waters)	Red grouper	None	Yellowedge grouper
Max (75-100% from federal waters)	Tiger grouper	None	None

Bold = indicator species. Red = Ad Hoc committee recommended removing. All results are preliminary.

St. Croix species with average commercial landings **greater than** the preliminary de minimis value, grouped by *Risk* and *Spatial* categories.

Location	High Risk (2.5-3.0)	Moderate Risk (1.5-2.0)	Low Risk (1.0)
State (< 5% from federal waters)	None	None	None
Low (5-25% from federal waters)	Queen parrotfish	None	None
Medium (25-50% from federal waters)	Queen conch, Redfin parrotfish, **Redtail parrotfish**, Redband parrotfish, Queen triggerfish	Spiny lobster, Yellowtail snapper, Doctorfish	None
High (50-75% from federal waters)	**Red hind**, **Stoplight parrotfish**	White grunt	**Blackfin snapper**, **Silk snapper**, Schoolmaster
Max (75-100% from federal waters)	None	None	Dolphin, Wahoo, Queen snapper

Bold = indicator species. Red = Ad Hoc committee recommended removing. All results are preliminary.

St. Croix species with average commercial landings **less than** the preliminary de minimis value, grouped by *Risk* and *Spatial* categories.

Location	High Risk (2.5-3.0)	Moderate Risk (1.5-2.0)	Low Risk (1.0)
No landings reported	Corals, Sea cucumbers, Nassau grouper, Goliath grouper, Midnight parrotfish, Rainbow parrotfish, Striped parrotfish	None	Longspine squirrelfish
State (< 5% from federal waters)	Blue parrotfish, Sea urchins	None	None
Low (5-25% from federal waters)	Tiger grouper	Graysby, Princess parrotfish	None
Medium (25-50% from federal waters)	Black grouper	None	Black snapper
High (50-75% from federal waters)	Red grouper, Yellowfin grouper	**Coney**, Bluestriped grunt, Gray snapper, Mutton snapper, Blue tang, Ocean surgeonfish	Misty grouper, Lane snapper, Vermilion snapper
Max (75-100% from federal waters)	None	Queen angelfish, Gray angelfish, French angelfish, Rock hind	None

Bold = indicator species. Red = Ad Hoc committee recommended removing. All results are preliminary.

St. Thomas/St. John species with average commercial landings **greater than** the preliminary de minimis value, grouped by *Risk* and *Spatial* categories.

Location	High Risk (2.5-3.0)	Moderate Risk (1.5-2.0)	Low Risk (1.0)
State (< 5% from federal waters)	None	None	None
Low (5-25% from federal waters)	None	None	None
Medium (25-50% from federal waters)	None	Blue runner	Spiny lobster
High (50-75% from federal waters)	None	Bluestriped grunt, Yellowtail snapper, Blue tang	**Redtail parrotfish**, **Stoplight parrotfish**
Max (75-100% from federal waters)	None	**Gray angelfish**, French angelfish, Red grouper, **White grunt**, Margate, **Saucereye porgy**, **Doctorfish**, Queen triggerfish, Hogfish	Dolphin, Coney, **Red hind**, **Blackfin snapper**, **Mutton snapper**

Bold = indicator species. Red = Ad Hoc committee recommended removing. Blue - St. Thomas FAC recommended removing. All results are preliminary.

St. Thomas/St. John species with average commercial landings **less than** the preliminary de minimis value, grouped by *Risk* and *Spatial* categories.

Location	High Risk (2.5-3.0)	Moderate Risk (1.5-2.0)	Low Risk (1.0)
No landings reported	Corals, Goliath grouper, Blue Parrotfish, Rainbow parrotfish, Midnight parrotfish, Striped parrotfish	None	None
State (< 5% from federal waters)	None	None	Queen parrotfish
Low (5-25% from federal waters)	None	Sheepshead porgy	None
Medium (25-50% from federal waters)	Sea cucumbers	None	Redband parrotfish, Redfin parrotfish
High (50-75% from federal waters)	Sea urchins	Queen conch, Jolthead porgy, Sea bream	Yellowedge grouper, Princess parrotfish, Vermilion snapper
Max (75-100% from federal waters)	Nassau grouper	Queen angelfish, Black grouper, Tiger grouper, Yellowfin grouper, Ocean surgeonfish	Misty grouper, Yellowmouth grouper, Black snapper, Silk snapper, Lane snapper, Queen snapper, Wahoo

Bold = indicator species. Red = Ad Hoc committee recommended removing. Blue - St. Thomas FAC recommended removing. All results are preliminary.

Options and Preliminary Results based on Step 1 - Landings Analysis

Option	Risk Categories Included	Landings from Federal Waters	Puerto Rico	St. Croix	St. Thomas/ St. John
Option 1	Retain all species currently managed under the X-island FMP.		spiny lobster, queen conch, 51 Reef Fish, 9 Pelagic Fish, 3 Rays & all corals, sea urchins, sea cucumbers	spiny lobster, queen conch, 41 Reef Fish, 2 Pelagic Fish, & all corals, sea urchins, sea cucumbers	spiny lobster, queen conch, 45 Reef Fish, 2 Pelagic Fish, & all corals, sea urchins, sea cucumbers
Option 2	All Risk Categories	**5% or more**	spiny lobster, queen conch, 17 Reef Fish, 8 Pelagic Fish	spiny lobster, queen conch, 14 Reef Fish, 2 Pelagic Fish	spiny lobster, 19 Reef Fish, 1 Pelagic Fish
Option 3	All Risk Categories	**25% or more**	4 Reef Fish, 4 Pelagic Fish	spiny lobster, queen conch, 13 Reef Fish, 2 Pelagic Fish	spiny lobster, 19 Reef Fish, 1 Pelagic Fish
Option 4	All Risk Categories	**50% or more**	3 Pelagic Fish	7 Reef Fish, 2 Pelagic Fish	18 Reef Fish, 1 Pelagic Fish
Option 5	Moderate & High Risk	**5% or more**	spiny lobster, queen conch, 17 Reef Fish	spiny lobster, queen conch, 10 Reef Fish	13 Reef Fish
Option 6	Moderate & High Risk	**50% or more**	none	3 Reef Fish	12 Reef Fish

The expanded list of species for each option and management area are located at the end of this presentation. All results are preliminary.

Fishery Management Unit (FMU) Evaluation

Step 2 - Decision Tree

Evaluation Flow

Species proposed for removal undergo systematic qualifying questions to decide their final status:

- **Retained** in the FMU
- **Reclassified** as ECS
- **Removed** from the FMP

Accurate Sorting

The decision tree incorporates screening questions to prevent incorrect exclusions based strictly on raw landings statistics.

Conservation Goal

The core purpose is to guarantee that any species determined by the Council to remain in the FMU requires conservation and management.

These species stay within the FMP framework, either actively managed with annual catch limits or designated as an ECS.

Step 2: Preliminary Decision Tree Questions

01

Target Species & Regulations Benefit

Is the species a target species and currently benefiting from federal regulations (e.g., catch prohibitions, seasonal closures, etc)?

YES - Retain in the FMU

NO - Move to the next question

02

Active Management Value

Can federal regulations improve or maintain stock condition (i.e., active management under an FMP), promote species recovery or advance recovery efforts for Endangered Species Act listed species, or address economic, social, or operational concerns

YES - Retain in the FMU

NO - Move to the next question

03

Foundational & Ecosystem Role

Is the stock an important component of the marine environment - such as in providing support to FMP-managed species or in achieving ecosystem management objectives?

YES - Reclassify as EC Species

NO - Remove from the FMP

04

Territorial Management Adequacy

For species retained in the FMU, is the species already adequately managed by Puerto Rico or USVI state agencies, state/federal programs, or another federal FMP?

YES - Remove from the FMP

NO - Retain in the FMU

NOTE - During this process, the Council can make exceptions to the ultimate disposition of each species. For example, the Council could recommend that a species that is retained in the FMU is better suited as an ECS.

Decision Tree Example | Puerto Rico species with landings below the de minimis value

Corals
Sea cucumbers
Sea urchins
Nassau grouper
Midnight parrotfish
Blue parrotfish
Giant manta ray

Queen parrotfish
Princess parrotfish
Redtail parrotfish
Redband parrotfish
Striped parrotfish
Queen angelfish
Gray angelfish
French angelfish
Blue tang
Doctorfish
Ocean surgeonfish

Graysby
Rock hind
Black snapper
Schoolmaster
Wenchman
Gray triggerfish
Ocean triggerfish
Spanish hogfish
Puddingwife

Black grouper
Red grouper
Tiger grouper
Yellowedge grouper
Yellowmouth grouper
Misty grouper

African pompano
Rainbow runner
Pompano dolphin

Q1 - Target species benefiting from federal regulations?

YES - Retain in the FMU

Black grouper, Red grouper, Tiger grouper, Yellowedge grouper, Black snapper

NO

Q2 - Would active management improve stock condition or address concerns?

YES - Retain in the FMU

Nassau grouper

NO

Q3 - Is the species critical to ecosystem, FMP-managed species, or is listed under the ESA?

YES - Reclassify as EC Species

Corals, Sea cucumbers, Sea urchins, Giant manta ray, Midnight parrotfish, Blue parrotfish, Queen parrotfish, Princess parrotfish, Redtail parrotfish, Redband parrotfish, Striped parrotfish, Gray angelfish, French angelfish, Blue tang, Doctorfish, Ocean surgeonfish

Q4 - Is the species **retained in the FMU** adequately managed by territories?

NO - Remove from the FMP

Misty grouper, Graysby, Rock hind, Schoolmaster, Wenchman, Gray triggerfish, Ocean triggerfish, Spanish hogfish, Puddingwife, African pompano, Rainbow runner, Pompano dolphin

Potential Future Actions to Consider

Regulatory adjustments to develop after the list of species is revised

01

ECS Management

Evaluate if regulations are required for ECS to preserve their ecosystem role.

02

Stock Complexes

Update management reference points (e.g., ACLs) if species are removed from the FMU.

Update ACLs with enhanced reporting.

03

Specific Measures

Evaluate and update as needed current species-specific measures like recreational bag limits or seasonal closures.

04

Extending Territorial Management

Sec 306(a)(3) of the MSA - a state may regulate vessels outside of the state's boundaries if it is registered under the law of that state and there is no FMP.

05

Other Actions?

Are there any other regulatory pathways, measures, or management options that should be evaluated?

Questions for Council

01

Do you have any suggestions on the options based on Step 1 (landings analysis)?

Are there other options that should be considered?

02

Do you have ideas on what landings threshold (de minimis value) should be used to separate directed from incidental catch for each management area?

03

Do you agree with the proposed decision tree questions?

Are there any you would change or add?

04

What benefits do you foresee from removing species from the FMU (no annual catch limits)?

What concerns do you have and how can those be best addressed?

Proposed Timeline

August 2026
Council Meeting

Overview of potential options for

Sept-Nov 2026
IPT Process

Develop Draft Amendment

December 2026
Council Meeting

Draft Amendment presented to the Council

April 2027
Council Meeting

To Be Determined

Questions

Preliminary Results of Step 1 Proposed Options

Option	Puerto Rico	St. Croix	St. Thomas/St. John
Option 1 (no action)	spiny lobster, queen conch, 63 species of finfish (51 Reef Fish, 9 Pelagic Fish, and 3 Rays), and all species of corals, sea urchins, and sea cucumbers	spiny lobster, queen conch, 43 species of finfish (41 Reef Fish, 2 Pelagic Fish), and all species of corals, sea urchins, and sea cucumbers	spiny lobster, queen conch, 47 species of finfish (45 Reef Fish, 2 Pelagic Fish), and all species of corals, sea urchins, and sea cucumbers
Option 2 (all risk and >5% federal waters)	queen conch, goliath grouper, yellowfin grouper, rainbow parrotfish, coney, red hind, white grunt, spiny lobster, mutton snapper, vermilion snapper, lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, cubera snapper, queen triggerfish, hogfish, great barracuda, little tunny, king mackerel, cero mackerel, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, cardinal snapper, queen snapper, blackfin tuna, dolphin, tripletail, and wahoo	queen conch, queen parrotfish, redfin parrotfish, redtail parrotfish, redband parrotfish, queen triggerfish, red hind, stoplight parrotfish, spiny lobster, yellowtail snapper, doctorfish, white grunt, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, schoolmaster, dolphin, wahoo, and queen snapper	blue runner, spiny lobster, bluestriped grunt, yellowtail snapper, blue tang, redtail parrotfish, stoplight parrotfish, gray angelfish, french angelfish, red grouper, white grunt, margate, saucereye porgy, doctorfish, queen triggerfish, hogfish, dolphin, coney, red hind, blackfin snapper, mutton snapper
Option 3 (all risk and >25% federal waters)	blackfin snapper, silk snapper, cardinal snapper, queen snapper, blackfin tuna, dolphin, tripletail, and wahoo	queen conch, redfin parrotfish, redtail parrotfish, redband parrotfish, queen triggerfish, red hind, stoplight parrotfish, spiny lobster, yellowtail snapper, doctorfish, white grunt, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, schoolmaster, dolphin, wahoo, and queen snapper	blue runner, spiny lobster, bluestriped grunt, yellowtail snapper, blue tang, redtail parrotfish, stoplight parrotfish, gray angelfish, french angelfish, red grouper, white grunt, margate, saucereye porgy, doctorfish, queen triggerfish, hogfish, dolphin, coney, red hind, blackfin snapper, mutton snapper

All results are preliminary.

Preliminary Results of Step 1 Proposed Options

Option	Puerto Rico	St. Croix	St. Thomas/St. John
Option 4 (all risk and >50% federal waters)	dolphin, tripletail, and wahoo	red hind, stoplight parrotfish, white grunt, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, schoolmaster, dolphin, wahoo, and queen snapper	bluestriped grunt, yellowtail snapper, blue tang, redtail parrotfish, stoplight parrotfish, gray angelfish, french angelfish, red grouper, white grunt, margate, saucereye porgy, doctorfish, queen triggerfish, hogfish, dolphin, coney, red hind, blackfin snapper, mutton snapper
Option 5 (high, moderate risk and >5% federal waters)	queen conch, goliath grouper, yellowfin grouper, rainbow parrotfish, coney, red hind, white grunt, spiny lobster, mutton snapper, vermilion snapper, lane snapper, yellowtail snapper, cubera snapper, queen triggerfish, hogfish, blackfin snapper, silk snapper, cardinal snapper, queen snapper	queen parrotfish, queen conch, redfin parrotfish, redtail parrotfish, redband parrotfish, queen triggerfish, red hind, stoplight parrotfish, spiny lobster, yellowtail snapper, doctorfish, and white grunt	blue runner, bluestriped grunt, yellowtail snapper, blue tang, gray angelfish, french angelfish, red grouper, white grunt, margate, saucereye porgy, doctorfish, queen triggerfish, and hogfish
Option 6 (high, moderate risk and >50% federal waters)	none	red hind, stoplight parrotfish, and white grunt	bluestriped grunt, yellowtail snapper, blue tang, gray angelfish, french angelfish, red grouper, white grunt, margate, saucereye porgy, doctorfish, queen triggerfish, and hogfish

All results are preliminary.