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Puerto Rico Spiny Lobster Framework Action 4 (SEDAR 91)



Sarah Stephenson, NMFS Sustainable Fisheries Division - Caribbean Branch
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Isla Verde, Puerto Rico

History



- At the August 2025 meeting, the Council directed staff to develop an action to the Puerto Rico FMP to address the SEDAR 91 stock assessments and modify accountability measures for spiny lobster.
- The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) finalized their recommendations for Puerto Rico spiny lobster at their July 7-8, 2026 meeting (SSC Chair presentation).
- The SSC recommended yearly acceptable biological catch values for Puerto Rico spiny lobster based on the SEDAR 91 stock assessment (table below).

Reference point (SEDAR 91)	2027	2028	2029
Overfishing Limit (OFL)	597,111	557,309	541,153
Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC)	543,406	507,184	492,481



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Action 1 - Set Annual Catch Limits (ACL)

The Council is requested to provide guidance on options for setting the ACL based on the recommended ABCs. The following options are presented for consideration:

Annual-Based Options (Changing Values)

Option 1. Set annual ACLs equal to annual ABCs (no management uncertainty)

Option 2. Set annual ACLs equal to 95% of the annual ABCs.

Option 3. Set annual ACLs equal to 90% of the annual ABCs.

Average-Based Options (Constant Values)

Option 4. Set constant ACL equal to 95% of the average ABCs.

Option 5. Set constant ACL equal to 90% of the average ABCs.

Other Options?

Action 1 - Set Annual Catch Limits (ACL)

Using the recommended ABCs, the ACLs (in pounds whole weight) for the five options presented for consideration would be as listed below.

Method	Option	2027	2028	2029
Annual-Based Options	Option 1	543,406	507,184	492,481
	Option 2	516,236	481,825	467,857
	Option 3	489,065	456,466	443,233
Average-Based Options	Option 4	488,639	488,639	488,639
	Option 5	462,921	462,921	462,921

Other Options?

History of Spiny Lobster Accountability Measures

- The spiny lobster AM trigger was modified under Framework Action 1 under the Puerto Rico FMP, which was effective April 15, 2023.
- The AM is triggered when the average of the most recent three years of spiny lobster landings exceeds the average ACLs in place during those years. The AM requires a closure of Federal waters, but because most spiny lobster landings come from territorial waters, the AM is ineffective at constraining landings to the ACL.
- National standard guidelines recommend that if catch exceeds the ACL for a given stock or stock complex more than once in the last four years, the system of ACLs and AMs should be reevaluated, and modified if necessary, to improve its performance and effectiveness. 50 CFR 600.310(g)(7).

Action 2 - Accountability Measures

The Council is requested to provide guidance on revising the current accountability measures for spiny lobster:

1 / TRIGGER

How the AM is Triggered

The most recent **3-year average commercial landings** are compared to the average ACLs that were effective during that same time 3-year period.

2 / APPLICATION

How the AM is Applied

If average landings exceed the average ACL due to **increased catch** (and not enhanced reporting), NMFS reduces the length of the fishing season within the current fishing year to prevent exceedance.

3 / REDUCTION TIMING

When the AM is Applied (fishing season closure)

Phase 1: Applied starting **September 30**, moving earlier toward the start of the fishing year.

Phase 2: If more reduction is needed, additional cuts apply starting **October 1**, moving towards the end of the year.

Action 2 - Accountability Measures

Select alternative approaches to modify current accountability measures for Puerto Rico spiny lobster. Can change the trigger, the application, or both.

01 / TRIGGER OPTION

Change the Trigger

Trigger an AM if the ACL is exceeded (using the current trigger process) **and** the fishery-dependent abundance trend (for example, the average carapace length or catch-per-unit-effort) is declining over the same time period.

02 / APPLICATION OPTION

Change the Application

Pick a different period to apply the fishing season reduction (for example - starting January 1 - X time).

Other?

Proposed Timeline



August 2026 Council Meeting

Overview of potential options
for Draft Framework Action

Sep-Nov 2026 IPT Process

Develop draft Framework
Action

December 2026 Council Meeting

Draft Framework Action
presented to the Council

April 2027 Council Meeting

To be Determined



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