March 24, 2009, Control Date Established for the Reef Fish, Queen Conch, and Spiny Lobster Fisheries of the U.S. Caribbean

At the March 2009 meeting, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council) voted to establish a control date for the commercial sector of the reef fish, queen conch, and spiny lobster fisheries operating in federal waters off Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. On July 8, 2009, NOAA Fisheries Service published an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) in the Federal Register (74 FR 32528) announcing anyone entering any of these fisheries after the control date will not be assured of future access should a management regime that limits the number of participants in any of these fisheries be prepared and implemented.

The establishment of this control date does not commit the Council or NOAA Fisheries Service to any particular management regime or criteria for entry into any of these fisheries. Fishermen would not be guaranteed future participation in any of these fisheries regardless of their entry date or intensity of participation in any of the fisheries before or after the control date under consideration.

The Council may choose to use a different control date, or to give variably weighted consideration to fishermen active in the fishery before and after the control date. Other qualifying criteria, such as documentation of landings and sales or possession of a valid Territorial/Commonwealth Permit, may be considered for entry into the fishery. The Council may also choose to take no further action to control entry or access to any of these fisheries, in which case the control date may be rescinded.

Request for Comments
Written comments on this ANPR must be received no later than 5 p.m., Eastern Time, on August 7, 2009, in order to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service. See the Addresses section for information on where and how to submit comments.