



Caribbean Fishery Management Council's Newsletter



Volume 3

June - August 2013

146th Regular CFMC Meeting Highlights

The 146th CFMC Regular Meeting was a one-day meeting held at the Verdanza Hotel in Carolina, Puerto Rico. It was notable the high number of fishers from Fajardo, Cataño and Vega Baja, Puerto Rico that attended the meeting.

The objective of this meeting was for the Council to receive and comment the report from the Scientific and Statistics Committee (SSC) on two South East Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) studies: SEDAR 30 U.S. Caribbean queen triggerfish (*Balistes vetula*/pejepuerco) and blue tang (*Acanthurus coeruleus*/médico azul) and SEDAR 26 of queen (*Etelis oculatus*/cartucho) and silk snapper (*Lutjanus vivanus*/chillo). The results from these studies are essential for the final stock assessment of the species.



146th CFMC Regular meeting at the Verdanza Hotel.

What is SEDAR?

It is a cooperative Fishery Management Council process initiated in 2002 to improve the quality and reliability of fishery stock assessments in the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and US Caribbean. The Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic Regional Fishery Management Councils manage SEDAR in coordination with NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions. SEDAR seeks to improve the scientific quality of stock assessments and greater relevance of quantities information available to address existing and emerging fishery management issues. SEDAR emphasizes constituent and stakeholder participation in assessment development, transparency in the assessment process, and a rigorous and independent scientific review of completed stock assessments. SEDAR is organized around 3 workshops. The first is a data workshop where datasets are documented, analyzed, and reviewed and data for conducting assessment analyses are compiled. The second is an assessment workshop where quantitative population analyses are developed and refined and population parameters are estimated. The third and final is a review workshop where a panel of independent experts reviews the data and assessment and recommends the most appropriate values of critical population and management quantities.

All SEDAR workshops are open to the public. Public testimony is accepted in accordance with each Council's Standard Operating Procedures. Workshop times and locations are noticed in advance through the Federal Register. Full details on the SEDAR process can be found on the SEDAR website:

<http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/>

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Dr. Barbara Kojis, SSC Chairperson gave a very detailed report and received comment from the Council and from the fishers present. Island platforms (St. Thomas/St. John, St. Croix and Puerto Rico) and gear types (hook and line) were assessed separately. Sources of information used were mainly: Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFS), Commercial Landings, Trip Interview Program (TIP) and species life history information from published literature.

It is important to emphasize the limitations encountered by the SSC on their analysis of queen triggerfish and blue tang: 1) lack of life history information, 2) low information content provided by the length frequency data for Blue tang because of its determinant growth, 3) potential violation of model assumptions because of dome shaped selectivity for queen triggerfish in STT/STJ due to discards of large fish, 4) uncertainty in the data due to inconsistencies in annual sample size and non-randomness of samples and, 5) inability to address biomass benchmarks due to considerable uncertainty in landings data.

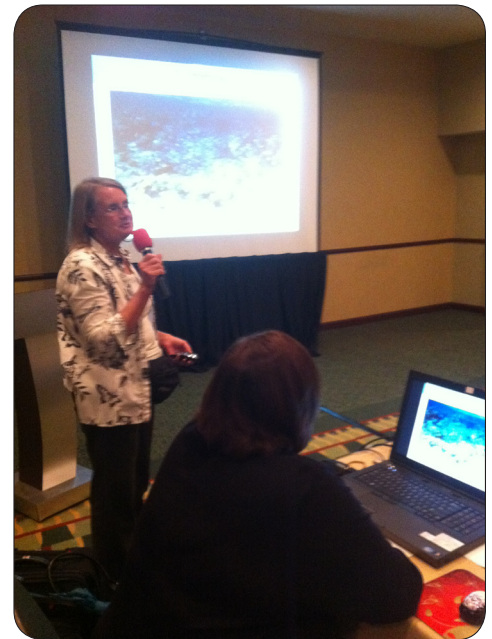
On the queen and silk snappers, the discussion centered around the following findings: 1) extremely high variability in landing data received from Puerto Rico and 2) lack of life history data on these species to determine natural and fishing mortality.

After their analysis, the SSC concluded that for the queen triggerfish fisheries in Puerto Rico and St. Thomas/St. John there is no evidence of overfishing. However, for St. Croix, the SSC indicates the possibility of overfishing, but in the absence of more reliable data the scientists cannot conclude that overfishing is occurring. Blue tang is not caught in Puerto Rico as a commercial species, but it is an important commercial species in the USVI. The

data examined does not give the SSC reasons to change the Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) for queen triggerfish and blue tang in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the CFMC's jurisdiction.

Dr. Kojis stressed the need for better, timely and reliable field data collection on which to base the stock assessments and management decisions.

Fishers from Puerto Rico presented their concerns on the impact on the data presented in these studies of the insertion of a considerable number of recreational fishers in the fisheries of deep water snappers and the unreliability of the landing data provided.



Dra. Barbara Kojis, SSC Chair addressing the Council.



Public attending the Verdanza meeting.

146th Regular CFMC Meeting Highlights

USVI fishers brought to the Council's attention, their concern with the fact that for the USVI fish size caught is more decided by the market demand than by the biological aspects of the species. This, influences greatly the landing data utilized in these studies. After long discussions two Motions to take action were approved:

1. Request staff to develop a framework action to modify the buffer between the Over Fishing Level (OFL) ABC and the annual catch limits (ACLs) for snapper and grouper species.
2. To appoint an Ad Hoc committee to examine the socioeconomic impacts of the timing of yearly closures and other AMs to make the appropriate recommendations to the CFMC at the next meeting.

Committee composition: Edward Shuster, Daryl Bryan, David Olsen, Barbara Kojis, Graciela García-Moliner, Roy Pemberton, Bill Arnold, Kate Quigly, Carlos Velázquez, Carlos Farchette, Roberto Reyes and a representation from the SEFSC.

Good News!

- Over the telephone, Dr. Bonnie Ponwith, director of the SEFSC, informed that NOAA Fisheries is allocating special funds to the CFMC to improve commercial landing data, validation of the data and collection of biological data satisfy the expressed need for better and more timely data for stocks assessments.
- Graciela García-Moliner, Fisheries Specialist at the CFMC completed her Ph.D in Marine Sciences this June.
- Kate Quigly joins the CFMC Staff as Fisheries Economist.
- The CFMC expresses their appreciation to Winston Ledee, for his important contribution to Council's tasks as USVI representative for the past years.

Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW) 2013

CHOW, hosted by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) provided policymakers, academics, business leaders and ocean enthusiasts with networking opportunities. CHOW took place at Washington D.C.'s Newseum from June 4-6.

During CHOW celebration, CFMC staff members participated in seminars and interactive discussions on the importance of our ocean economy, its linkage to ocean exploration and the need for marine conservation. The CFMC exhibit was well received and participants had the opportunity of tasting some of our best fish and seafood samplers prepared by Juan Carlos Vicens.



Highlights from the 147th Regular Meeting

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council met for its 147th Regular Meeting at the Ponce Hilton on August 13 and 14. There was a healthy representation of citizens interested in fisheries from Puerto Rico and the USVI among the public.

Mr. Tony Blanchard was sworn in, as new Council Member, by Mr. Roy Crabtree and Mr. Carlos Farchette, Council Chair. Mr. Blanchard will represent the fishers from the USVI for the next four years.

Mr. Carlos Farchette was reelected as Council Chair.

Miguel García (DNER) offered a presentation on Special Permit to manage snapper unit 2: queen snapper & cardinal snapper. Administrative order: closure for snapper unit 2 after sept. Authorization will be required. Max 120 trips/yr plus monthly reporting of landings.



Tony Blanchard being sworn as new Council member by Roy Crabtree and Carlos Farchette

Promoting Sustainable Fishing through Environmental Interpretation



Dr. Alejandro Torres addressing the Council.

Fishers are not the only ones responsible for fisheries resources protection. This is an action that involves all citizens. To support this, Dr. Alejandro Torres presented different Environmental Interpretation activities implemented in the eastern region of Puerto Rico, based principally in the development of awareness about the Marine Protected Areas of La Cordillera Reefs in Fajardo and Canal Luis Peña in Culebra. In these activities students and general communities participated in field trips and coastal festivals that emphasized the conservation of the marine resources in these areas.

Sustainable fish traps to catch octopus and spiny lobster

Prototypes of sustainable fish traps to catch octopus and spiny lobster were presented by Mr. Héctor Padró, President of the Yabucoa Fishers Association in Puerto Rico. The octopus trap has been designed to avoid the use of toxic substances, such as Clorox and detergents to catch octopus. This is an illegal fishing practice, due to the negative impacts to the marine environment. The lobster trap (sombras langosteras) is a passive structure that may be deposited on the bottom near the lobsters, baited adequately that will attract the lobsters, avoiding the use of snarls and hooks. These instruments may kill the lobsters and also impact the corals where they hide. These prototypes raised a lot of interest among the public.



Hector Padró describing sustainable fishing traps.

Fisheries Resource Education for Fishers



Carlos Velazquez, president from the Naguabo, PR Corporación de Pescadores Unidos.

Mr. Carlos Velázquez, President of the Naguabo, Puerto Rico Corporación de Pescadores Unidos shared his experiences as participant of the Marine Resource Education Program in St. Petersburg, Florida in 2012. He had, the rich opportunity, to participate in different training sessions on fishing gears and practices, conservation measures, socio-economic aspects of fisheries and visits to fisheries research laboratories in the area. Mr. Velázquez request to the Council develop a similar training program for Puerto Rico's fishers. The need is justified by the fact that there is a new generation of fishers throughout the Island, with new fishing methods and regulations.

US Virgin Islands Fishing Heritage and Culture: A Snap Shot Through Time

The US Virgin Islands has a long history of human-environment interactions. The profound ties of the local community to the marine environment are particularly notable. For centuries, US Virgin Islanders have been sustained from dependence on the sea for its resources and this can be seen as far back as the Salidoid and Taino era, in the colonial era, and during US sovereignty leading up to the present. Over time, though the level of dependence has changed, one thing holds true, US Virgin



Angel "Exodus" Bolques and E. Franklin Tulloch

Islanders are deeply connected with the sea and its fisheries resources, which support local consumption and livelihoods. With changing generations, fisheries heritage and culture is at risk for being lost considering dynamics in fishing gear, technology, methods, fisher perspectives and community interest. The CFMC and NOAA/ CRCP, in collaboration with other local and regional partners of the Marine Outreach and Education USVI Style Initiative: "Don't Stop Talking Fish" project are in the process of developing a film highlighting centuries of human-fishery interactions encompassing the heritage and culture as well as the day in the life of a fisher. The purpose of the film is to improve community awareness and appreciation for fisheries resources, habitat and fishers. This film will be showcased at the Don't Stop Talking Fish community event, which will be held at Great Pond, St. Croix on June 28, 2014, closing the USVI's Fisher Appreciation Week. Beyond this event, the film will be showcased at other appropriate film festival venues and used as an educational tool in classrooms and relevant workshops.



Look up for the video at youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AshZokZSN3Y>

For more information about the film and the Marine Outreach and Education USVI Style Initiative: "Don't Stop Talking Fish" project, contact Lia Ortiz, NOAA CRCP USVI Fisheries Liaison at

Email: lia.ortiz@noaa.gov

Phone: (340) 718-1236

Future Actions of the Council

The Council will, in the near future, bring to public comments the issue of developing compatible regulations for three seasonally closed areas off Puerto Rico: Abrir la Sierra, Bajo de Sico and Tourmaline Banks. Fishers from Puerto Rico have presented this request to the Council. These are important fishing areas where resources are managed by the Council to protect the red hind spawning aggregations and large individuals of snappers and groupers to obtain a more natural sex ratio, age, and size structure as well as minimize socio-economic effects. The action to be considered is based on the need to avoid confusion among fishers and ensure compliance with the regulations already established. Another future action will be the discussion with the public to revise the current buffer between the OFL and the ACL for snappers and groupers, which was established in the Reef Fish FMP-Regulatory Amendment 5. Dr. Bill Arnold, (SERO staff, Caribbean Branch chief at the Regional Office), presented the Options Paper and Scoping Document relevant to these future actions. These will be discussed at the December meeting.

E/V Nautilus visit to the Caribbean Sea

The E/V Nautilus is a 64-meter (211-foot) exploration vessel equipped with state-of-the-art exploration and telepresence technology. It is equipped with remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) on board, named Hercules and Argus, which are used to view the seafloor with high definition video, take environmental measurements and collect geological and biological samples.

Dr. Robert Ballard and Dr. Katherine Croff Bell of the Ocean Exploration Trust lead the Nautilus Corps of Exploration, which includes a rotating team of more than 150 scientists, engineers, educators and students as they explore these poorly understood regions of the world's oceans. The Caribbean Sea Cruise will go from 4 October – 16 November, 2013 Puerto Rico, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Dominica and Grenada.

Dr. Graciela García-Moliner, Scientist at the CFMC staff had the opportunity to participate with the E/V Nautilus team in the exploration of the Barracuda bank near the British Virgin Islands from 12 -18 October. Dr. Roy Armstrong from the Department of Marine Sciences, University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus participated in the exploration of the Puerto Rico Trench and the Mona Passage, including Desecheo.

Graciela's experience during the exploration was awesome. She had the opportunity to see many of the deep water fish alive and in its natural habitat within the exclusive economic zone at depths of 3,000 to 115 meters. The geological landscapes that compose the habitat of the deep water fish and invertebrates, including corals, were alive with these water communities. The most amazing thing is to be able to share this exploration LIVE with kids and adults from Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, as well as with the world.



Acronyms

ACL - Annual Catch Limit

AP – Advisory Panel

AM - Accountability Measure

CITES - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

CFMC - Caribbean Fishery Management Council

CRCP – Coral Reef Conservation Program

CRFM - Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism

FMP - Fishery Management Plans

MSA – Magnuson Steven Act

NEPA - National Environmental Policy Act

NMFS - National Marine Fisheries Service

NOAA - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

OEAP – Outreach and Education Advisory Panel

OSPESCA – Organization for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector of the Central American Isthmus

PEPCO - Programa Educativo para Pescadores Comerciales

PR - Puerto Rico

PRDNER - Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources

SERO - NMFS / Southeast Regional Office

SSC - Scientific and Statistical Committee

USVI - United States Virgin Islands

WECAFC - Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission

Upcoming Events & Announcements

• The 148th CFMC Regular Meeting will be held in St. Thomas, USVI on December 11-12-14, 2013. For more information, please contact Diana Martino at the CFMC Headquarters.

• The Scoping Meeting of Bajo de Sico will be held in Mayagüez, PR November 25, 2013 at the Holiday Inn, Mayagüez.



You can follow the expedition live at:
www.explorationnow.org or www.nautiluslive.org

Credits

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Special thanks to the Council staff members who helped with the review of the newsletter.

Editor's Note

The Caribbean Newsletter is published by The Caribbean Fishery Management Council. Its purpose is to report developments in fisheries management that would be of interest to its readers. Please credit the council when reprinting articles used in this newsletter. Anyone wishing to submit information or articles pertaining to fishing or fisheries management, or letters to the editor on a pertinent issue, is invited and encouraged to do so. These may be mailed to Natalia Perdomo, Caribbean Newsletter, 270 Muñoz Rivera Avenue Suite 401 San Juan Puerto Rico, 00918, or may be sent via internet to this email address nataliaperdomo_cfmc@yahoo.com.