Objective 1- Provide for long-term sustainable use of fisheries resources within the limits of local ecosystem production using a precautionary, ecosystem-based approach to management that accounts for uncertainty and relevant biological, ecological, economic and social factors in the fishery, including the benefits of food production, recreational opportunities, and protection of marine ecosystems.

Rationale for inclusion:

1. An ecosystem-based approach to fishing is consistent with the policies for conservation and coastal zone management under Title 12 of the Virgin Islands Code, specifically,to consider use impacts on marine life and the coastal environment, protect complexes of marine resource systems of unique productivity, and assure that activities are designed so as to minimize adverse effects on marine resource productivity and habitats, among other things (12 V.I.C. § 903).
2. The Council has taken actions in the past that reflect an ecosystem-based approach, such as the prohibition on the harvest of corals and establishment of seasonal or area closures to protect spawning aggregations. This objective reiterates the work the Council has done in the past and will continue to do in the future.
3. Assuming an ecosystem approach to fisheries management would also account for climate change impacts on the fisheries, as opposed to solely focusing on the fishing impacts.

Objective 2- Reduce bycatch and waste in the fishery through the use of measures such as gear restrictions, seasonal closures or marine protected areas that reduce or minimize regulatory and/or economic discards, including measures to minimize the mortality of discarded bycatch that cannot be avoided.

Rationale for inclusion:

1. Reducing bycatch is important for habitat health and is also a resource that can provide revenue and recreation for users.
2. There already exist measures that fishers have taken, e.g. trap vents, increased fish trap mesh size and year round closed areas which reduces bycatch mortality and minimizes waste.

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Objective 3- Establish and maintain data collection and reporting programs necessary to support the conservation and management objectives of the Plan, including the biological, ecological, economic, and social data needed to assess the impacts of management measures.

Rationale for inclusion:

1. Fishermen have long complained about "bad data", so improving it should be a top priority.
2. Ensuring that data programs are adequate to support management should be a priority objective of each island FMP. This would help to achieve sustainable use of fisheries resources in the region, by improving the quality of the data obtained.
3. This is a requirement of the federal fisheries law.

Objective 4- Collaborate with domestic and international regional fishery management bodies in managing pan-Caribbean species.

Rationale for inclusion:

1. Our most important fishery resource, the Caribbean spiny lobster, and queen conch is a resources which in its' larval stage comes from outside recruitment, through currents, and drifting seaweed, therefore we must work with our Caribbean island nations in the management of these very important species and spawning aggregations throughout the Caribbean basin.
2. There already exist this collaboration through WECAFC and should be maintained, enhanced and supported.

Objective 5- Promote fair and equitable use of fishery resources that recognizes the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities as well as differences in local environment, culture, markets, user groups, gears, and seafood preferences.

Rationale for inclusion:

1. Fair and equitable use between all user groups is essential in recognizing the importance of the cultural differences between fishing sectors such as, recreational, commercial, charter for hire and tourism, taking into consideration the differences in staple food for each sector/island.

Objective 6- Provide flexibility in the management process which minimizes regulatory delay and allows for rapid adaptation to changing resource abundance, availability, health or preference, using the best available scientific and socioeconomic information.

Rationale for inclusion:

1. Waiting two or more years before fishing rules reflect changes on the water can be detrimental to the fishers who depend on the resource for a living. In season or near in season information is essential for minimizing regulatory delay.
2. Flexibility to rapidly respond to changing conditions is essential to make sure fishermen can maximize catch while keeping populations sustainable. But for this to be feasible, it is necessary to have adequate data to monitor and track changes that may occur. Hence, this objective is tied to #3 which focuses on establishing and maintaining data collection and reporting programs that could inform management.

Objective 7- Devise a regulatory framework that maximizes the efficiency and efficacy of enforcement efforts within and across jurisdictional boundaries while promoting the safe conduct of fishing operations.

Rationale for inclusion:

1. Local and Federal authorities must work cohesively to maximize resources while taking into consideration safety at sea of the fishers.

Objective 8- Promote awareness of laws and regulations governing marine resource management and the science and social obligations that support that management, and to ensure informed public input into the management process.

Rationale for inclusion:

1. Outreach and Education is a priority in the management of fisheries.

2. Existing and updated laws and regulations must be disseminated to the public through the office of Fish and Wildlife, DPNR Enforcement for local waters, and, through the Council for federal waters.

Objective 9- Protect spawning aggregations and the habitats supporting those aggregations to ensure the future health of the resource.

Rationale for inclusion:

1. It is common sense that if you fish down places where certain reef fish gather to spawn at predictable times and places each year, then eventually there will be a lot fewer fish and fishermen will suffer. And because fishermen often come to know when and where these spawning aggregations happen, they can get fished out rapidly. There are numerous scientific studies that back this up. This objective recognizes the importance of protecting these key habitats giving the Council the flexibility to determine exactly how to do that.

Objective 10- Map, define, and manage habitat upon which the resource depends, with particular emphasis on coral reef resources throughout the region.

Rationale for inclusion:

1. Many fisheries in St. Croix are dependent upon healthy coral reefs. Mapping them and managing them to ensure they can support abundant fish populations is just common sense and will help keep fisheries profitable for years to come.
2. This information would help inform the Council on the status of marine habitats and facilitate management actions. In particular as climate change alters the marine landscape, a detailed knowledge of the local habitats will be invaluable.
3. The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires FMP's describe Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and include maps that display the geographic locations or boundaries within which EFH for each species.

Objective 11- Account for ecological relationships and functional roles of species in the fishery that contribute to a healthy ecosystem, such as grazers, forage fish, habitat-builders and top predators.

Rationale for inclusion:

1. The Council has already taken important steps in this direction by recognizing that the best use of coral resources is to leave it in the water to provide habitat as the foundation for the sustainability of the reef fish fishery. Consideration of these relationships and roles in the reef ecosystem is a vital key to sustainability and should be an explicit objective of management going forward.
2. Failure to consider and account for the ecological interactions between key species and their coral reef habitat can result in unintended consequences that undermine the health and sustainability of the fisheries.

Objective 12- Require essential scientific data is gathered and analyzed in advance to guide the development of new fisheries to ensure they are sustainable from the start.

Rationale for inclusion:

1. Use data to monitor trends in the fisheries. Also, monitor advance technology in the fishing community which may create overfishing if not managed in a sustainable manner.