

St. Croix's Island-Based Fishery Management Plan

Goals and Objectives

The overarching *goal* of each of the Island-Based Fishery Management Plans is to ensure the continued health of fishery resources occurring in waters surrounding Puerto Rico, St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix Exclusive Economic Zones within the context of the unique biological, ecological, economic and cultural characteristics of those resources and the community's dependent upon them.

Specific goals for the geographical area of the Exclusive Economic Zone of St. Croix are:

Goal #1: Prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from each fishery in the U.S. Caribbean while ensuring the continued health of the fishery resource occurring in the geographical area of the EEZ of St. Croix while providing for the sustained participation of the fishing communities and to the extent practical, minimize adverse economic impacts on such communities.

Goal #2: Manage the fisheries within the limits of local ecosystem production so as not to jeopardize a wide range of goods and services provided by a healthy ecosystem, including to food, revenue, and recreation for humans.

Goal #3: Ensure continued provision of ecosystems services derived from living marine resources, including adequate abundance of forage resources to ensure a healthy and diverse trophic web.

Goal #4: 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.

Goal #5: Foster collaboration among territorial and federal authorities in the management of fisheries in the geographical area of the EEZ for St. Croix

To achieve the overarching goals described above the following objectives are defined:

Objective #1: Provide for long term sustainable use of fisheries resources using an 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 resources.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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.

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