



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Britni Tokotch or Britni.Tokotch@noaa.gov
727/824-5305, FAX 727/824-5308
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

April 5, 2013
FB13-032

February 10, 2011, Control Date Established for the Commercial Trap Sectors of the Reef Fish and Spiny Lobster Fisheries of the U.S. Caribbean

Comment Period Ends May 6, 2013

At their August 2012 meeting, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council) voted to establish a control date of February 10, 2011 for the commercial trap sectors of the reef fish and spiny lobster fisheries operating in federal waters off Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). Fishermen would not be guaranteed future participation in these sectors regardless of their entry date or intensity of participation in the sectors before or after the control date under consideration.

On April 5, 2013, NOAA Fisheries published an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) in the *Federal Register* (78 FR 20496) announcing anyone entering these sectors 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.

Previously, the Council established a control date of March 24, 2009, for the commercial sector of the reef fish, queen conch, and spiny lobster fisheries operating in federal waters off Puerto Rico and the USVI. Subsequent to that action, the USVI began development of trap reduction programs and established a February 10, 2011, control date. At their August 2012 meeting, the Council discussed the ongoing development of trap reduction programs for the USVI, which if approved and implemented, will preserve and protect the historical and cultural fish trap sectors in a

sustainable manner by reducing the total number of traps. To be consistent with the territorial regulations, the Council voted to update the previous control date of March 24, 2009, and establish a February 10, 2011, control date for the commercial trap sectors of the reef fish and spiny lobster fisheries of the U.S. Caribbean.

The establishment of this control date does not commit the Council or NOAA Fisheries to any particular management regime or criteria for entry into these sectors. 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 May 6, 2013**, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries.

How to Submit Comments

You may submit comments by either of the following methods. Comments received through other means may not be considered.

Electronic Submissions: Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov

- Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to: www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2013-0022.
- Click on “Comment Now.” This will display the comment Web form.
- Attachments to electronic comments (up to 10 MB) will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

Mail:

Britni Tokotch
NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505

All comments will be part of the public record, and generally posted for public viewing to www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter, may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. Anonymous comments will be accepted.