



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA Fisheries Reminds the Public of Current Fishing Regulations in Federal Waters off Western Puerto Rico at Bajo de Sico, Tourmaline Bank, and Abrir La Sierra Bank

NOAA Fisheries would like to remind the public of the current regulations in federal waters of the Bajo de Sico, Tourmaline Bank, and Abrir La Sierra Bank seasonal area closures in federal waters off western Puerto Rico. U.S. Caribbean federal waters off Puerto Rico extend from the nine nautical mile seaward boundary of Puerto Rico out to 200 nautical miles offshore.

At their August 2015 meeting, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Council) discussed modifying the closed seasons and closure provisions for Bajo de Sico, Tourmaline Bank, and Abrir La Sierra Bank. The Council decided to not change the management of these areas; therefore, **the current regulations for these three areas remain in place.**

The regulations are summarized below. Coordinates for the three managed areas and a map depicting the area boundaries can be found on page 2 of this bulletin.

The closures are intended to protect red hind spawning aggregations and large snappers and groupers, and to better protect the essential fish habitat where these species reside.

This bulletin provides only a summary of the information regarding the existing regulations. Any discrepancies between this bulletin and the regulations as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.

Management Measures	Bajo de Sico	Tourmaline Bank	Abrir La Sierra Bank
Closure Months	October 1 – March 31, each year	December 1 – February 28, each year	December 1 – February 28, each year
Managed Fishing Activities	No fishing for or possession of Caribbean reef fish managed by the Council ¹ in or from federal waters of Bajo de Sico during closure ²	No fishing for any species during closure	No fishing for any species during closure
	Fishing with pots, traps, bottom longlines, gillnets or trammel nets is prohibited year-round within the federal waters of Bajo de Sico, Tourmaline Bank and Abrir La Sierra Bank.		
Anchoring	No anchoring year-round	Anchoring allowed year-round using only an anchor retrieval system that recovers the anchor by its crown	Anchoring allowed year-round using only an anchor retrieval system that recovers the anchor by its crown

¹For a complete list of Council-managed reef fish, please see Table 2 of Appendix A to Part 622--Caribbean Reef Fish in federal regulations at 50 CFR Part 622.

²During the Bajo de Sico seasonal area closure, fishers are allowed to harvest spiny lobster and species not managed by the Caribbean Fishery Management Council, including highly migratory species (HMS) or other non-HMS coastal migratory pelagics.

The Bajo de Sico area closure is bounded by rhumb lines connecting, in order, the following coordinates:

- A 18°15.7' N 67°26.4' W
- B 18°15.7' N 67°23.2' W
- C 18°12.7' N 67°23.2' W
- D 18°12.7' N 67°26.4' W
- A 18°15.7' N 67°26.4' W

Regulations only apply to the portion of Bajo de Sico in federal waters.

The Abrir La Sierra Bank area closure lies completely within federal waters. The area closure is bounded by rhumb lines connecting, in order, the following coordinates:

- A 18°06.5' N 67°26.9' W
- B 18°06.5' N 67°23.9' W
- C 18°03.5' N 67°23.9' W
- D 18°03.5' N 67°26.9' W
- A 18°06.5' N 67°26.9' W

The Tourmaline Bank area closure is bounded by rhumb lines connecting, in order, the following coordinates:

- A 18°11.2' N 67°22.4' W
- B 18°11.2' N 67°19.2' W
- C 18°08.2' N 67°19.2' W
- D 18°08.2' N 67°22.4' W
- A 18°11.2' N 67°22.4' W

Regulations only apply to the portion of Tourmaline Bank in federal waters.

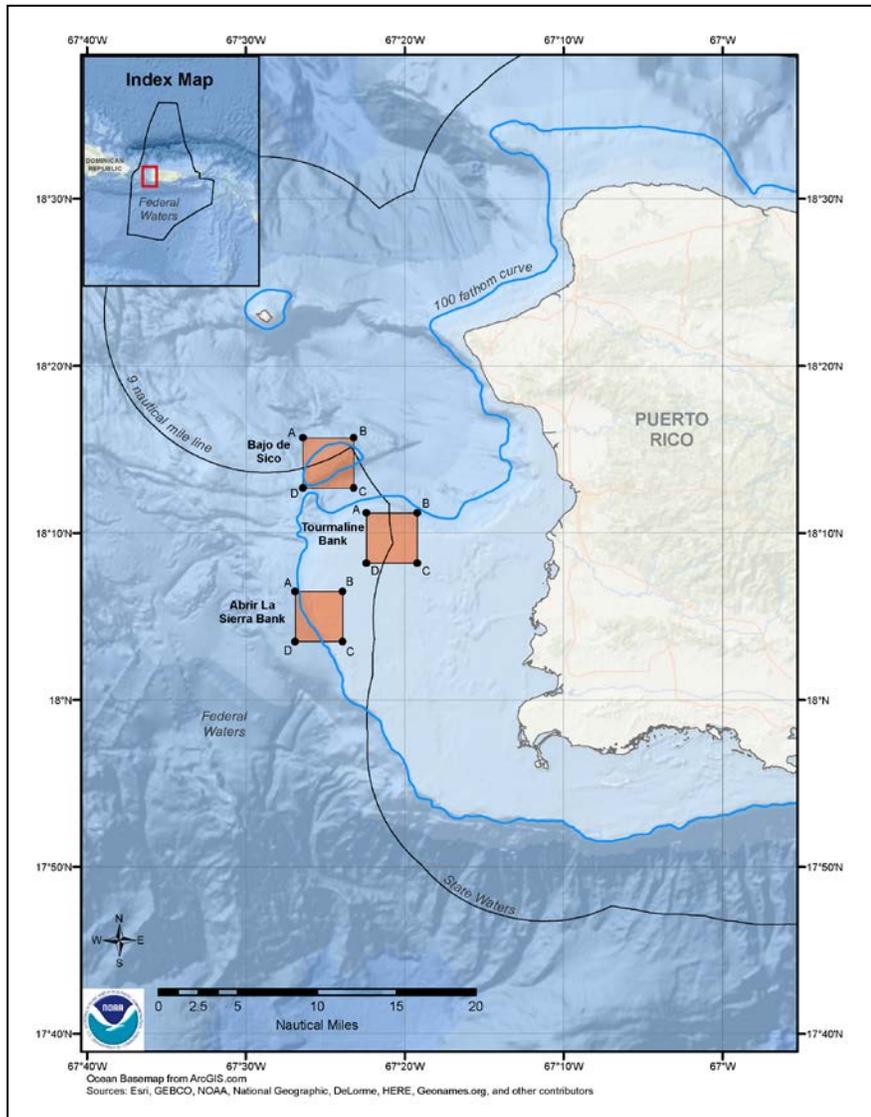


Figure 1. Map showing the Bajo de Sico, Abrir La Sierra Bank, and Tourmaline Bank seasonal closure areas in western Puerto Rico.