



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

María del Mar López or maria.lopez@noaa.gov
727-824-5305, FAX 727-824-5308

March 1, 2016

FB16-012

NOAA Fisheries Seeks Comments on a Proposed Rule to Revise Accountability Measure Language in the U.S. Caribbean Fishery Management Plans

Comment Period Ends March 28, 2016

NOAA Fisheries seeks public comment on a proposed rule to implement the Comprehensive Amendment to the U.S. Caribbean Fishery Management Plans: Application of Accountability Measures. The amendment would revise text within the Reef Fish, Queen Conch, Spiny Lobster, and Corals and Reef Associated Plants and Invertebrates Fishery Management Plans of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to be consistent with language in the implementing regulations describing the application of accountability measures in the U.S. Caribbean exclusive economic zone. This proposed change would only revise text in the respective fishery management plans and would not change the regulations.

The proposed rule also informs the public about three other administrative changes to the regulations that are not contained in the amendment. The proposed rule published in the *Federal Register* on February 26, 2016 (81 FR 9800), with a comment period ending **March 28, 2016**.

Purpose of the Accountability Measures Application Amendment

The purpose of the amendment is to ensure the regulations governing accountability measures in U.S. Caribbean federal waters are consistent with their authorizing fishery management plans. *Accountability measures* are management controls to prevent annual catch limits from being exceeded and to correct or mitigate overages of the annual catch limit if they occur. *Annual catch limits* are the amount of a particular fish species, stock or stock complex that can be caught in a given year.

Additional Proposed Changes in the Rule

If implemented by NOAA Fisheries, this proposed rule would also:

- Specify what restrictions on fishing occur when an annual catch limit is exceeded and an accountability measure is implemented.
- Clarify that the spiny lobster annual catch limit for the Puerto Rico management area applies to both the commercial and recreational sectors.

- Clarify that for the queen conch, only one of the measurement descriptions (i.e., shell length or lip width) must be met to fulfill the minimum size limit requirement.

Request for comments

NOAA Fisheries must receive comments on this proposed rule no later than March 28, 2016. We will address all comments specifically directed to the Accountability Measures Application Amendment, or the proposed rule, in the final rule. You may obtain electronic copies of the Amendment and the proposed rule from the NOAA Fisheries Website: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/caribbean/generic/accountability_measures/index.html, the e-Rulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov, or the Caribbean Fishery Management Council Website: <http://www.caribbeanfmc.com>.

How to Submit Comments

You may submit comments on the proposed rule, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2015-0124, by any of the following methods:

Electronic Submission: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#1documentDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2015-0124-0005>, click the “Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

Mail: Submit written comments to María del Mar López, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

Instructions: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NOAA Fisheries. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NOAA Fisheries will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).