

Summary of Commercial and Recreational Fishing Regulations in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off the United States Virgin Islands

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service are responsible for the conservation and orderly utilization of the fishery resources of the U.S. Caribbean Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which includes 3-200 nautical miles from the coast off the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). For information on the regulations for Highly Migratory Species (HMS) including tunas, swordfish, billfishes, and sharks, visit <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/> or call 301-427-8503.

Seasonal and Area Closures

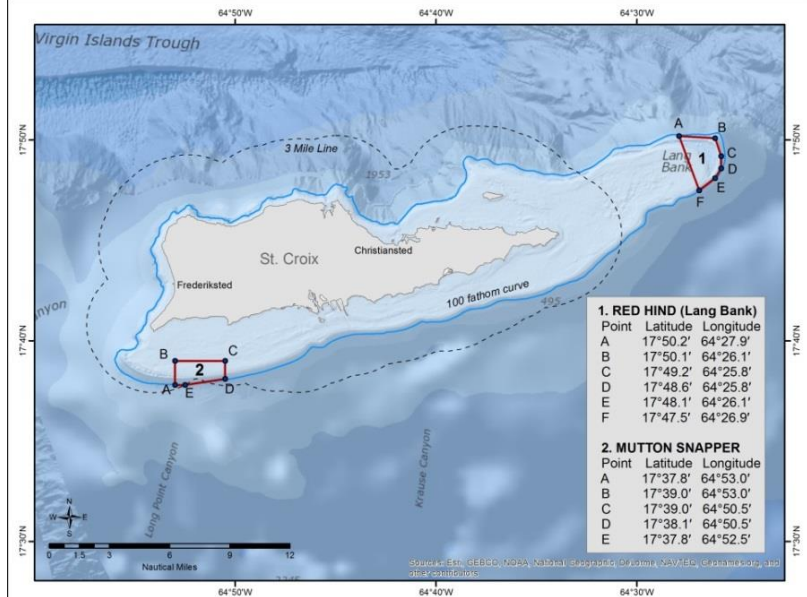
St. Croix

1. Red Hind Spawning Aggregation Area (Lang Bank):

Closed from December 1 through February 28, each year, to all fishing activities, including HMS species and Caribbean spiny lobster. The use of pots, traps, bottom longlines, gill or trammel nets is prohibited year-round.

2. Mutton Snapper Spawning Aggregation Area:

Closed from March 1 through June 30, each year, to all fishing activities, including HMS species and Caribbean spiny lobster. The use of pots, traps, bottom longlines, gill or trammel nets is prohibited year-round.



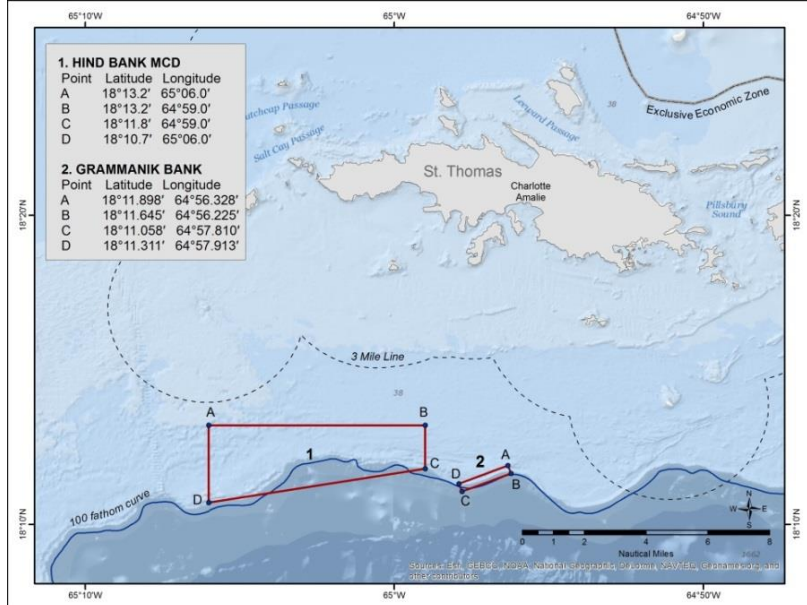
Seasonal and Area Closures

St. Thomas

1. Hind Bank Marine Conservation District (MCD):

Closed year-round to all fishing activities, including HMS species and Caribbean spiny lobster. Anchoring is prohibited year-round.

2. Grammanik Bank: Closed from February 1 through April 30, each year, to all fishing activities. Harvest of HMS species is allowed. The use of pots, traps, bottom longlines, gill or trammel nets is prohibited year-round.



Gear and Method Restrictions

Applicable to All Fisheries

No use of explosives.
Toxic chemicals may not be used or possessed in a coral area.

- Reef Fish, including aquarium trade species
- Coral Reef Resources, including aquarium trade species
- Spiny Lobster
- Queen Conch

Applicable to Specific Fisheries

- No use of poisons, drugs, or other chemicals, powerheads, gillnets and trammel nets. Dip nets and slurp guns allowed for aquarium species. *Fish must be landed with head and fins intact.
- No use of chemicals, plant-derived toxins, and power-assisted tools.
- No use of spears, hooks, or similar devices, gillnets or trammel nets. Spiny lobster must be landed with head and carapace intact. Harvest of egg bearing females is prohibited
- No harvest by diving while using a continued surface air supply. Queen conch must be landed with meat and shell intact.

* Certain exceptions to this rule apply. See 50 CFR 622.10

Seasonal Closures

No harvest of the following species in the EEZ during the dates indicated below

February 1 - April 30

April 1 - June 30

October 1 - December 31

December 1 - Last day of February



Red Grouper



Mutton Snapper



Black Grouper



Lane Snapper



Tiger Grouper



Black Snapper



Yellowfin Grouper



Blackfin Snapper



Yellowedge Grouper



Vermilion Snapper

June 1 - October 31



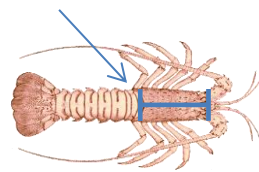
Silk Snapper



Red Hind Grouper – Closure applies only to the Red Hind Spawning Aggregation Areas and west of 67°10' W longitude.

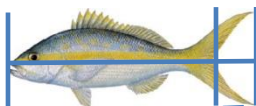
Size Limits

Carapace Length (CL)



Spiny Lobster - Minimum size limit is 3.5 in (8.9 cm) CL.

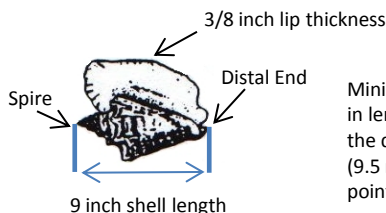
Total Length (TL)



Yellowtail Snapper - Minimum size limit of 12 in (30.5 cm) TL applies year-round for yellowtail snapper.

Fork Length (FL)

Parrotfish - Minimum size limit of 8 in (20.3 cm) FL for redband parrotfish and 9 in (22.9 cm) FL for all other parrotfish species except midnight, blue, and rainbow for which harvest is prohibited. Size limits only apply in St. Croix EEZ waters.



Queen Conch

Minimum size limit of 9 in (22.9 cm) in length from the tip of the spire to the distal end of the shell, or 3/8 in (9.5 mm) in lip width at its widest point.

Queen Conch Harvest Limits

Commercial Sector - 200 queen conch per vessel/day.

Recreational Sector - 3 queen conch per person/day, or if more than 4 persons on board vessel, 12 queen conch per vessel/day.

Prohibited Harvest

If these species are caught in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ, they must be returned immediately to the water with minimal harm



Midnight Parrotfish



Queen Conch - EEZ harvest allowed only east of 64°34' W which includes Lang Bank, St. Croix.



Blue Parrotfish



Goliath Grouper



Rainbow Parrotfish



Prohibited Corals



Nassau Grouper

Recreational Bag Limits

Aggregate bag limit for:	Allowed quantity:	
	Per Person/Day	Per Vessel/Day
snapper grouper parrotfish	5 fish per person/day	OR if 3 or more persons are on board, 15 fish per vessel/day
angelfish, boxfish, goatfish, grunts, wrasses, jacks, scups and porgies, squirrelfish, tilefish, surgeonfish, triggerfish and filefish	5 fish per person/day	OR if 3 or more persons are on board, 15 fish per vessel/day
spiny lobster	3 spiny lobsters per person/day	No more than 10 spiny lobsters per vessel/day

This publication was prepared for general informational purposes only and has no legal force or effect. Fishing regulations are subject to change. For additional and updated regulations please visit http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/policy_branch/index.html. Illustrations: D. Peebles, D. Raver, NOAA, N. Deloach.

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