

Science, Service, Stewardship



Caribbean Amendment 4 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fishery Management Plan – Final Rule

HMS Advisory Panel Meeting
September 2012

**NOAA
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Need for Action

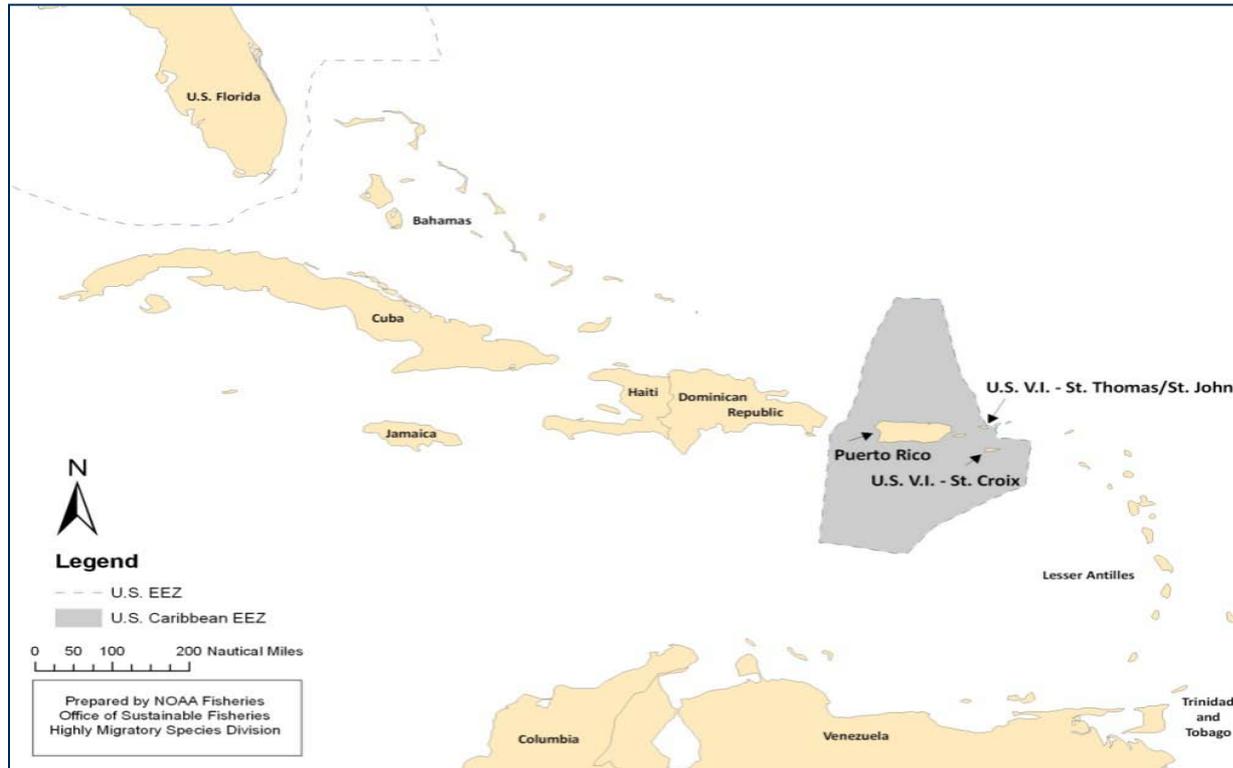
There is increasing interest in HMS in the U.S. Caribbean.

Some HMS regulations established for the continental United States do not fit well in the U.S. Caribbean Region:

- Small-scale fisheries
- Small markets and few dealers - catch often sold directly to individuals or restaurants
- High cost of limited access swordfish and shark permits can be a barrier to entering the HMS fisheries for some
- Low number of HMS fishing permits and dealer permits has resulted in limited HMS catch and landings data



U.S. Caribbean Region



➤ U.S Caribbean Region as defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at 50 CFR §622.2



Management Objectives

- Increase participation in the HMS federal fishery management program in the U.S. Caribbean Region;
- Expand regional HMS permit availability and increase permitting program awareness, participation, and compliance in the U.S. Caribbean Region;
- Improve regional HMS catch and fishing effort data;
- Examine and implement regionally tailored HMS management strategies, as appropriate;
- Provide targeted training and outreach to Caribbean HMS fishery participants; and,
- Improve NMFS capability to monitor and sustainably manage U.S. Caribbean HMS fisheries.



Amendment 4

Public Comments

- Support for the action – permit, gears, reporting
- Possession of territorial commercial fishing licenses should be a pre-requisite for obtaining the HMS Commercial Caribbean Small Boat (CCSB) permit and territorial requirements must be met to sell fish in the U. S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.
- Higher retention limits for tunas and sharks
- The CCSB permit should allow recreational fishing for billfish.



Amendment 4

Public Comments

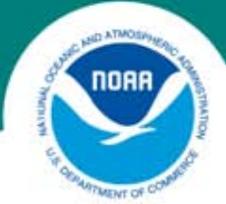
- Six total buoys per vessel per trip with one hook per buoy is the maximum amount of gear needed.
- Avoiding an awkward fit between regulations and traditional Caribbean fisheries is not a sound reason for exempting anyone from compliance with the regulations. Effort should be made to increase compliance with existing regulations.
- NMFS should better educate permitted dealers in the U.S. Caribbean in order to improve data.



Amendment 4

Public Comments

- Vessel length of 45 ft or less is not a good distinguishing characteristic for small boats that would be eligible for the CCSB permit. Thirty feet in length would be better.
- High fuel prices have shortened fishing trips from the U.S. mainland, thus there are no differences in the length of fishing trips between the U.S. mainland and the U.S. Caribbean.



Amendment 4

Public Comments

- High operating costs have reduced profit margins for fishermen working from the mainland, thus limited profit margins are not substantially different in the Caribbean.
- NMFS should consider allowing HMS permits to be valid for more than a year.
- NMFS should evaluate HMS stock status by region.



Amendment 4

Public Comments

- NMFS should not authorize sales of HMS to non-seafood dealers because it would be incompatible with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Hazard, Analysis, and Critical Control Points.
- NMFS should require HMS to be iced properly.



Final Action

Caribbean-specific measures for small-scale HMS commercial fishermen that include:

- New vessel permit - Caribbean Commercial Small Boat permit – valid only in the U.S. Caribbean
- May not be held with other HMS permits
- Vessel size restriction (≤ 45 ft LOA)
- Allows sale of catch to non-dealers
- Reporting via territorial data collection program in cooperation with NMFS
- Mandatory workshop training if shark retention limit > 0
- Administered by NMFS Southeast Regional Office Permits Office



Specifically authorized gears and retention limits:

- Bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack tunas (BAYS)
 - Rod and reel, handline, buoy gear, greenstick, bandit gear, harpoon
 - Retention limit = 10 BAYS tunas in aggregate per trip
- Swordfish
 - Rod and reel, handline, buoy gear, bandit gear, harpoon
 - Retention limit = 2 swordfish per trip
- Sharks
 - Rod and reel, handline, bandit gear
 - Retention limit = 0 (no retention allowed) at this time



Timeframe of Action

- Notice of Intent – May 2008
- Scoping - July through October, 2008
- Predraft – August 2009
- Draft Amendment and Proposed Rule – March 16, 2012
- Final Amendment and Final Rule signed by AA today -
publication in the Federal Register anticipated next
week
 - Permit application to SERO Permits Office – late 2012
 - Permit effective – January 2, 2013