



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

NMFS Announces the Availability of an Issues and Options Document and Scoping Meetings for Management of Caribbean HMS Fisheries

Based on discussions with the Caribbean Fishery Management Council and the territorial governments of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) believes that depletion of continental shelf fishery resources is increasing those territories' interest in Highly Migratory Species (HMS) resources as an alternative catch. As fishermen become more dependent on offshore resources and increase fishing effort on HMS, there is an increasing need for NMFS to modify the current HMS permitting and reporting regime to improve participation by small commercial Caribbean vessels and better collect catch and effort data.

On May 27, 2008 (73 FR 30381), NMFS published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to amend the Consolidated HMS FMP, and to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. The NOI summarized the rationale for considering modifications to the current HMS permitting and reporting regime and requested comments from the public on a variety of management options for this action.

An issues and options document, which describes potential management measures that may be included in the upcoming Amendment 4 to the Consolidated HMS FMP, is now available on the HMS website (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/>). NMFS will be holding five scoping meetings to obtain comments from the public on Caribbean HMS management measures. The scoping meetings will be held in Puerto Rico and the USVI.

NMFS also will present an issues and options presentation to the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, and New England Fishery Management Councils. Please see their meeting notices for times and locations (see www.nmfs.noaa.gov for Council links). NMFS also expects to present an issues and options presentation at the fall 2008 HMS Advisory Panel (AP) meeting. The actual date and location of the HMS AP meeting will be announced in a future Federal Register notice.

The comment period for the NOI ends on October 31, 2008. Comments can be submitted to Greg Fairclough, 263 13th Avenue South, Saint Petersburg, FL 33701. Please mark the outside of the envelope "Scoping Comments on Amendment 4 to Consolidated HMS FMP." Comments can also be submitted via e-mail at noi.hms.caribbean@noaa.gov or via FAX at (727) 824-5398.

This notice is a courtesy to Atlantic HMS Fisheries interests to keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such a notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact Greg Fairclough or Randy Blankinship at (727) 824-5399, or Jackie Wilson at (240) 338-3936.

for Emily Menachies
Alan Risenhoover
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

JUL 14 2008

Date



Table 1. Dates, Times, and Locations of the Scoping Meetings.

Date	Time	Meeting Locations	Address
8/14/2008	5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	St. Thomas, VI	USVI Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Cyril E. King Airport, Terminal Building, 2 nd Floor, St. Thomas, VI 00802
9/8/2008	3 pm – 5 pm	San Juan, PR	Biblioteca Carnegie, Ave. Ponce de León #7, San Juan, PR 00901-2010
9/9/2008	4 pm – 6 pm	Fajardo, PR	Salón Centro de Usos Múltiples de Fajardo, Estacionamiento Municipal, Último Piso, Esquina de Calle Dr. López y Calle Celis Aguilera, Fajardo, PR 00738 (Detrás de la Plaza del Mercado de Fajardo) For additional location information call the Servicio de Extensión Agrícola at 787-863-0352
9/10/2008	2 pm – 4 pm	Ponce, PR	Servicio de Extensión Agrícola, 2440 Ave. Las Americas, Ste. 208, Centro Gubernamental, Ponce, PR 00717-2111
9/11/2008	7 pm – 9 pm	Mayagüez, PR	University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus, Physics Building, Room 310, Mayagüez, PR 00680