

Dolphin and Wahoo Management in the U.S. Caribbean Region

Background

- Federal fisheries in the U.S. Caribbean Region are managed by the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Caribbean Council) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under three island-based fishery management plans (FMP) ([87 FR 56204](#); effective 10/13/2022). The three island-based FMPs are:
 - Comprehensive FMP for the Puerto Rico exclusive economic zone (EEZ) (Puerto Rico FMP)
 - Comprehensive FMP for the St. Croix EEZ (St. Croix FMP), and
 - Comprehensive FMP for the St. Thomas and St. John EEZ (St. Thomas and St. John FMP).



Dolphin Management - Puerto Rico FMP

Current Regulations

- Annual catch limits (ACLs), annual catch targets (ACTs), and accountability measures (AMs) for dolphin in Puerto Rico - [50 CFR 622.440\(b\)](#). Units = whole weight.

ACLs and ACTs

- (i) Commercial ACL—232,173 lb.
- (ii) Commercial ACT—208,956 lb.
- (iii) Recreational ACL—1,513,873 lb.
- (iv) Recreational ACT—1,362,486 lb.

AMs

At or near the beginning the fishing year, landings for each stock, stock complex, or indicator stock will be evaluated relative to the applicable ACT for the stock or stock complex based on a moving multi-year average of landings, as described in the FMP. If NMFS estimates that landings have exceeded the applicable ACT specified in [paragraph \(b\)](#) of this section for a stock or stock complex, NMFS in consultation with the Caribbean Fishery Management Council will determine appropriate corrective action.



Dolphin and Wahoo Management - St. Croix FMP

Current Regulations

- ACLs, ACTs, and AMs for dolphin and wahoo in St. Croix - [50 CFR 622.480\(b\)](#).
Units = whole weight.

ACLs and ACTs

<i>Dolphin</i>	<i>Wahoo</i>
(i) ACL—86,633 lb.	(i) ACL—27,260 lb.
(ii) ACT—77,970 lb.	(ii) ACT—24,534 lb.

AMs

At or near the beginning the fishing year, landings for the stock or stock complex will be evaluated relative to the ACT for the stock or stock complex based on a moving multi-year average of landings, as described in the FMP. If NMFS estimates that landings have exceeded the ACT specified in [paragraph \(b\)](#) of this section, NMFS in consultation with the Caribbean Fishery Management Council will determine appropriate corrective action.



Dolphin and Wahoo Management – St. Thomas and St. John FMP

Current Regulations

- ACLs, ACTs, and AMs for dolphin and wahoo in St. Thomas/St. John - [50 CFR 622.515\(b\)](#). Units = whole weight.

ACLs and ACTs

<i>Dolphin</i>	<i>Wahoo</i>
(i) ACL—9,778 lb.	(i) ACL—6,879 lb.
(ii) ACT—8,800 lb.	(ii) ACT—6,191 lb.

AMs

At or near the beginning the fishing year, landings for the stock or stock complex will be evaluated relative to the ACT for the stock or stock complex based on a moving multi-year average of landings, as described in the FMP. If NMFS estimates that landings have exceeded the ACT specified in [paragraph \(b\)](#) of this section, NMFS in consultation with the Caribbean Fishery Management Council will determine appropriate corrective action.



General Regulations Applicable to Dolphin and Wahoo

- Landing fish intact ([50 CFR 622.10](#)).
- Seasonal area closures where all fishing is prohibited:

Puerto Rico

- Abrir La Sierra Bank red hind spawning aggregation area [50 CFR 622.439\(a\)\(1\)](#) - From December 1 through the last day of February, each year, fishing is prohibited in Abrir La Sierra Bank.
- Tourmaline Bank red hind spawning aggregation area [50 CFR 622.439\(a\)\(2\)](#) - From December 1 through the last day of February, each year, fishing is prohibited in those parts of Tourmaline Bank that are in the EEZ around Puerto Rico.

St. Croix

- Mutton snapper spawning aggregation area [50 CFR 622.479\(a\)\(1\)](#) - From March 1 through June 30, each year, fishing is prohibited in those parts of the mutton snapper spawning aggregation area that are in the EEZ around St. Croix.
- Red hind spawning aggregation area east of St. Croix [50 CFR 622.479\(a\)\(2\)](#) - From December 1 through the last day of February, each year, fishing is prohibited in the red hind spawning aggregation area east of St. Croix.



General Regulations Applicable to Dolphin and Wahoo

- Seasonal area closures where all fishing is prohibited (contd.)

St. Thomas and St. John

- Grammanik Bank [50 CFR 622.514\(a\)\(1\)](#) - From February 1 through April 30, each year, no person may fish for or possess any species of fish, except highly migratory species, in or from the Grammanik Bank. (Highly migratory species means bluefin, bigeye, yellowfin, albacore, and skipjack tunas; swordfish; sharks)
- Hind Bank Marine Conservation District [50 CFR 622.514\(a\)\(2\)](#) - Fishing for any species and anchoring by fishing vessels is prohibited year-round in those parts of the Hind Bank MCD that are in the EEZ around St. Thomas and St. John.



Next Steps

- In April 2023, the Caribbean Council recommended the following regarding new management measures for dolphin and wahoo in Amendment 3 to the island-based FMPs:
 - Preferred Alternative for minimum size limit of 24” fork length [FL] for dolphin for all sectors.
 - Preferred Alternative for minimum size limit of 40” FL for wahoo for all sectors.
 - Preferred Alternative for recreational bag limit of dolphin in St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John: 10 per person per day/32 per vessel per day.
 - Add an alternative for recreational bag limit of wahoo: 2 per person per day/10 per vessel per day.
 - Move the actions establishing a commercial trip limit for dolphin and wahoo to considered but rejected section of the amendment.
 - Staff to include size and recreational bag limit options for dolphin and wahoo in Puerto Rico.
 - Caribbean Council will review the amendment at their August 2023 meeting and finalize the selection of preferred alternatives. Final action could be at their December 2023 meeting.



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