

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1531-1544; and 16 U.S.C. 742a *et seq.*, unless otherwise noted.

Dated: June 11, 1996.

Rolland A. Schmitt, Jr.,
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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50 CFR Part 669

[I.D. 060496E]

Caribbean Fishery Management Council; Public Hearing

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Public hearing; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Caribbean Council) will convene one public hearing on alternatives for closed areas to protect spawning aggregations of red hind in an area off Mayaguez, PR.

DATES: Written comments will be accepted on or before July 15, 1996. The public hearing will be held on June 19, 1996, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to, and copies of a document summarizing the management alternatives to be considered are

available from, Mr. Miguel A. Rolon, Executive Director, Caribbean Fishery Management Council, 268 Munoz Rivera Ave., Suite 1108, San Juan, PR 00918. The hearing will be held at the Joyuda Plaza Hotel, Cabo Rojo, PR.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Miguel A. Rolon, 809-766-5926; Fax: 809-766 6239.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Caribbean Council will be holding a public hearing on alternatives for closed areas to protect the spawning aggregations of the red hind grouper, which usually form during the period December 1 through February 28 of each consecutive year.

The current regulations implementing the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Fishery of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands establish a closed area off Mayaguez, PR, to protect the spawning grounds of this grouper species. Recent information obtained by the Caribbean Council indicates that the red hind aggregations are taking place in other sites outside the present closed area. The Caribbean Council will be considering closed area alternatives that would be more effective in protecting the red hind spawning aggregations while resulting in fewer adverse regulatory impacts to fishers.

Alternatives under consideration include: (1) No action (i.e., keep the

same area of seasonal closure (Amendment 2 of the Reef Fish FMP, 1993)); (2) closing an area of 1/2 mile (2.41 km) radius around "Buoy 8" to all fishing from December 1 to February 28 of each fishing year; (3) closing an area of 1/2 mile (2.41 km) radius around "Buoy 6" to all fishing from December 1 to February 28 of each fishing year; (4) closing an area of 1/2 mile (2.41 km) radius centered around a buoy to be deployed in the area known as "El Bajo de Sico" to all fishing between December 1 to February 28 of each fishing year; and (5) closing all three areas identified above to all fishing between December 1 and February 28 of each fishing year.

Special Accommodations

This hearing is physically accessible to people with disabilities. For more information or requests for sign language interpretation and/or other auxiliary aids please contact Mr. Miguel A. Rolon at 809-766-5926 (see **ADDRESSES**) at least 5 days prior to the hearing date.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: June 11, 1996.

Richard H. Schaefer,
Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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