



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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December 30, 2011

FB11-107

NOAA Fisheries Service Announces New Regulations for Reef Fish, Queen Conch, Spiny Lobster, and Corals and Reef Associated Plants and Invertebrates in the U.S. Caribbean

Small Entity Compliance Guide

On December 20, 2011, NOAA Fisheries Service approved the 2011 Caribbean Annual Catch Limit Amendment. This amendment to the fishery management plans for reef fish, spiny lobster, queen conch resources, and corals and reef associated plants and invertebrates in the U.S. Caribbean is designed to bring those fisheries into compliance with the 2006 revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. A final rule implementing these regulations published in the *Federal Register* on December 30, 2011 (76 FR 82414) with an effective date of January 30, 2012.

The final rule modifies regulations for the spiny lobster, angelfish, boxfish, goatfish, grunts, wrasses, jacks, scups and porgies, squirrelfish, surgeonfish, triggerfish and filefish, tilefish, queen conch, and corals and reef associated plants and invertebrates fishery management units, including aquarium trade species.

The final rule makes the following changes:

- Establishes annual catch limits for species where the rate of removal is not too high, and puts accountability measures into place to protect the fish stocks in both the commercial and recreational sectors.
- Initiates the transfer of all aquarium trade species included in the Coral and Reef Associated Plants and Invertebrates and the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plans into a new fishery management plan dedicated to aquarium trade species.
- With the exception of queen conch, removes from federal management all species previously included in the Queen Conch Resources Fishery Management Plan.
- Establishes boundaries for purposes of applying accountability measures in federal waters.

- Establishes recreational fishing bag limits as follows:
 - For the reef fish species mentioned above, a bag limit of five fish per person per day, with no more than one surgeonfish per person per day within the aggregate. A vessel limit of fifteen fish per day, including no more than four surgeonfish per vessel per day, was also approved.
 - For spiny lobster, a bag limit of three spiny lobsters per person per day with a vessel limit of ten spiny lobsters per day.
- Establishes separate annual catch limits for each of the commercial and recreational sectors in the federal waters of Puerto Rico.
- Establishes framework provisions for the Spiny Lobster Fishery Management Plan and modifies framework provisions for the Coral and Reef Associated Invertebrates Fishery Management Plan.
- Provides guidelines for triggering accountability measures and for applying those measures.

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996.

Electronic copies of the amendment and final rule may be obtained from the NOAA Fisheries Service Web site:

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/CaribbeanReefFish.htm>

This bulletin provides only a summary of the information regarding the existing regulations. Any discrepancies between this bulletin and the regulations as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.

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