Summary of Commercial and Recreational Fishing Regulations in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off the United States Virgin Islands

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service are responsible for the conservation and orderly utilization of the fishery resources of the U.S. Caribbean Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which includes 3-200 nautical miles from the coast off the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). For information on the regulations for Highly Migratory Species (HMS) including tunas, swordfish, billfishes, and sharks, visit http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/ or call 301-427-8503.

Seasonal and Area Closures

St. Croix
1. Red Hind Spawning Aggregation Area (Lang Bank): Closed from December 1 through February 28, each year, to all fishing activities, including HMS species and Caribbean spiny lobster. The use of pots, traps, bottom longlines, gill or trammel nets is prohibited year-round.

2. Mutton Snapper Spawning Aggregation Area: Closed from March 1 through June 30, each year, to all fishing activities, including HMS species and Caribbean spiny lobster. The use of pots, traps, bottom longlines, gill or trammel nets is prohibited year-round.

St. Thomas
1. Hind Bank Marine Conservation District (MCD): Closed year-round to all fishing activities, including HMS species and Caribbean spiny lobster. Anchoring is prohibited year-round.

2. Grammanik Bank: Closed from February 1 through April 30, each year, to all fishing activities. Harvest of HMS species is allowed. The use of pots, traps, bottom longlines, gill or trammel nets is prohibited year-round.

Gear and Method Restrictions

Applicable to All Fisheries

- No use of explosives.
- Toxic chemicals may not be used or possessed in a coral area.

Applicable to Specific Fisheries

- Reef Fish, including aquarium trade species
  - No use of poisons, drugs, or other chemicals, powerheads, gillnets and trammel nets. Dip nets and slurp guns allowed for aquarium species.
  - Fish must be landed with head and fins intact.

- Coral Reef Resources, including aquarium trade species
  - No use of chemicals, plant-derived toxins, and power-assisted tools.

- Spiny Lobster
  - No use of spears, hooks, or similar devices, gillnets or trammel nets.
  - Spiny lobster must be landed with head and carapace intact. Harvest of egg bearing females is prohibited.

- Queen Conch
  - No harvest by diving while using a continued surface air supply.
  - Queen conch must be landed with meat and shell intact.

* Certain exceptions to this rule apply. See 50 CFR 622.10

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Seasonal Closures
No harvest of the following species in the EEZ during the dates indicated below

February 1 - April 30
- Red Grouper
- Black Grouper
- Tiger Grouper
- Yellowfin Grouper
- Yellowedge Grouper

April 1 - June 30
- Mutton Snapper
- Lane Snapper
- Black Snapper
- Blackfin Snapper
- Vermillion Snapper
- Silk Snapper

October 1 - December 31
- Red Grouper
- Black Grouper
- Yellowfin Grouper
- Yellowedge Grouper

June 1 - October 31
- Queen Conch

December 1 - Last day of February
- Red Hind Grouper

Queen Conch – EEZ harvest allowed only east of 64°34’ W which includes Lang Bank, St. Croix. Harvest closure might occur earlier than June 1 if 50,000 lb territorial/EEZ quota is met.

Prohibited Harvest
If these species are caught in the U.S. Caribbean EEZ, they must be returned immediately to the water with minimal harm
- Midnight Parrotfish
- Blue Parrotfish
- Rainbow Parrotfish
- Nassau Grouper
- Goliath Grouper
- Prohibited Corals

Queen Conch - EEZ harvest allowed only east of 64°34’ W which includes Lang Bank, St. Croix.

Size Limits
- Spiny Lobster - Minimum size limit is 3.5 in (8.9 cm) CL.
- Total Length (TL)
- Yellowtail Snapper - Minimum size limit of 12 in (30.5 cm) TL applies year-round for yellowtail snapper.
- Parrotfish - Minimum size limit of 8 in (20.3 cm) FL for redband parrotfish and 9 in (22.9 cm) FL for all other parrotfish species except midnight, blue, and rainbow for which harvest is prohibited. Size limits only apply in St. Croix EEZ waters.
- Queen Conch - Minimum size limit of 9 in (22.9 cm) in length from the tip of the spire to the distal end of the shell, or 3/8 in (9.5 mm) in lip width at its widest point.

Queen Conch Harvest Limits
Commercial Sector - 200 queen conch per vessel/day.
Recreational Sector - 3 queen conch per person/day, or if more than 4 persons on board vessel, 12 queen conch per vessel/day.

Recreational Bag Limits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggregate bag limit for:</th>
<th>Per Person/Day</th>
<th>Per Vessel/Day</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>snapper group parrotfish</td>
<td>5 fish per person/day OR if 3 or more persons are on board, 15 fish per vessel/day</td>
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<tr>
<td>angelfish, boxfish, goatfish, grunts, jacks, scups and porgies, surgeonfish, triggerfish, filefish</td>
<td>5 fish per person/day OR if 3 or more persons are on board, 15 fish per vessel/day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spiny lobster</td>
<td>3 spiny lobsters per person/day No more than 10 spiny lobsters per vessel/day</td>
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This publication was prepared for general informational purposes only and has no legal force or effect. Fishing regulations are subject to change. For additional and updated regulations please visit [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/policy_branch/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/policy_branch/index.html). Illustrations: D. Peebles, D. Raver, NOAA, N. Deloach.

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Illustrations:
- Midnight Parrotfish
- Blue Parrotfish
- Rainbow Parrotfish
- Nassau Grouper
- Goliath Grouper
- Prohibited Corals