Caribbean Fishery Management Council's ACLs Plan

- The CFMC developed a process to establish Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and Accountable Measures (AMs) to comply with the Magnuson Stevens Reauthorization Act (MSRA) requirements for 2010 and 2011 deadline.

- In 2009, the process was started with the SEDAR meeting that was held in January 2009, in San Juan, Puerto Rico. This meeting served as a basis for identifying the best available data and models that can be used by the CFMC to establish the overfishing limits (OFLs), the allowable biological catch (ABC) and the Annual Catch Limits (ACLs).

- In February 2009, the ACL plan development group (ACLG) is holding meetings to examine the SEDAR report, as well as to receive presentations by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center scientists and independent scientists, among others, on the different models that can be used in the US Caribbean to set these parameters.

- Also, in February 2009, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will follow the ACLG meeting, to review the information from SEDAR and the recommendations from the ACLG, to decide on the best approach to determine the OFL and ABC for the applicable species that will be submitted to the CFMC at its March meeting.

- The CFMC will hold three (3) meetings (March, June, and August) to prepare the proposed management measures and the amendments to the FMPs to establish the ACLs and AMs for the species undergoing overfishing or that are overfished in the US Caribbean.

- It is expected that this schedule will meet the deadline for 2010.

- Immediately after, the CFMC will use the same process for the other species under management. The amendments to the FMPs should be ready for the 2011 deadline.

ACL Plan Development Group (ACLG)
For Comprehensive Amendment to the Spiny Lobster,
Queen Conch and Reef Fish FMPs

The CFMC has established the ACL Plan Development Group (ACLG) composed of federal and non-federal scientists, Council staff and others knowledgeable about US Caribbean fisheries. The ACLG will prepare a draft Comprehensive Amendment to the Spiny Lobster, Queen Conch and Reef Fish FMPs in compliance with the MSRA. The tasks of the ACLG are as follows:

1. Review and update the determinations of the SFA in terms of species and area groupings for management, MSYs and OYs,

2. Assemble information on the species and species groups such as trends in a) effort b) relative abundance, c) size composition, and any other relevant information on habitat and environmental conditions, among others,

3. Using information from No. 2 above, make status determination using quantitative and qualitative approaches, as appropriate, including informed professional judgments,

4. For practical reasons, such determinations may be by relatively coarse groupings, such as not overfished, overfished, "very overfished,"

5. Use results from No. 1-4 above, to set Annual Catch Limits (ACLs). Quantitative and qualitative approaches should be used as appropriate, including informed professional judgments. Protocols for deriving ACL based on MSYs, OYs, recent average catches and status determinations may be developed and applied as appropriate,

6. Identify and evaluate alternative management measures (e.g., time and area closures, size and gear restrictions, effort limits, catch limits, etc.) which are deemed sufficient to prevent ACLs from being violated with a reasonable degree of certainty, based on guidance regarding risk tolerance from the Council,

7. Develop specifications in terms of membership, terms of reference, and work schedule for a Monitoring and Compliance Group (MCG) with the role of determining when ACLs and other FMP requirements are being violated, and recommending corrective actions, and

8. Prepare default actions that will be taken automatically if the MCG determines that ACL and other FMP requirements are being violated, unless the Council adopts other corrective actions resulting from No. 7, above. Such default actions should have a high probability of preventing future violations and compensating for adverse impacts to fishery resources and ecosystems that are likely to have occurred as a result of such violations.

Recalling the CFMC's SFA [Comprehensive] Amendment which establishes estimates of MSY and OY for species and species groups under the purview of the CFMC, and in response to the 2006 Reauthorization of the MSFCMA (hereafter, referred to as "The Act") which calls on FMCs to "... establish a mechanism for specifying annual catch limits in the plan (including a multiyear plan), implementing regulations, or annual specifications, at a level such that overfishing does not occur in the fishery, including measures to ensure accountability.":

The SSC of the CFMC recommends the establishment of an ACL Plan Development Group (ACLG) composed of federal and non-federal scientists, Council staff and others knowledgeable about US Caribbean fisheries. The ACLG should be charged with preparing a draft Comprehensive Amendment to the Spiny Lobster, Queen Conch and Reef Fish FMPs that fulfills requirements of The Act. The ACLG should:

1. Review and update the determinations of the SFA in terms of species and area groupings for management, MSYs and OYs,
2. Assemble information on the species and species groups such as catch trends, effort trends, relative abundance trends, size composition and trends, other relevant information such as habitat trends and environmental conditions,
3. Using information from #2, make status determination using quantitative and qualitative approaches, as appropriate, including informed professional judgments,
4. For practical reasons, such determinations may be by relatively coarse groupings, such as not overfished, overfished, very overfished,
5. Use results from # 1-4 to set Annual Catch Limits (ACLs). Quantitative and qualitative approaches should be used as appropriate, including informed professional judgments. Protocols for deriving ACL based on MSYs, OYs, recent average catches and status determinations may be developed and applied as appropriate,
6. Identify and evaluate alternative management measures (e.g., time and area closures, size and gear restrictions, effort limits, catch limits, etc.) which are deemed sufficient to prevent ACLs from being violated with a reasonable degree of certainty, based on guidance regarding risk tolerance from the Council,
7. Develop specifications in terms of membership, terms of reference, and work schedule for a Monitoring and Compliance Group (MCG) with the role of determining when ACLs and other FMP requirements are being violated, and recommending corrective actions, and
8. Prepare default actions that will be taken automatically if the MCG determines that ACL and other FMP requirements are being violated, unless the Council adopts other corrective actions resulting from No. 7, above. Such default actions should have a high probability of preventing future violations and compensating for adverse impacts to fishery resources and ecosystems that are likely to have occurred as a result of such violations.

The MCG should continue to function for the duration of the FMP. Estimates of MSYs, OYs, status determinations, ACLs and recommended management measures resulting

from this process should be reviewed by the SSC to determine that they are scientifically sound based on the best scientific information available.

In the interim, the Council should establish a Technical Monitoring and Compliance Team to examine and analyze existing catch data, port sampling data, historical data and data from existing databases such as TIP, SEAMAP and SEDAR. The Team will summarize and compile these data to show catch rates and other biologically relevant data (size frequency) and trends over time and provide these to the SSC on a regular basis. The Team will also inform the SSC and CFMC when OY's are being approached or exceeded. In addition, the Team will also inform the CFMC and SSC of other relevant information as appropriate concerning the performance of the plan. It will identify existing data gaps and make recommendations on how to fill them.