



CONSERVING FISH IN THE U.S. CARIBBEAN

MYTH

1 Decisions about fishing limits and rules are based on poor data. There is no data from the U.S. Virgin Islands.

2 Fish populations are declining due to pollution, not fishing.

3 Fish populations are not undergoing overfishing; there is no reason to enact new regulations.

4 New regulations will have extremely negative effects on the economy.

5 The U.S. government has no right to manage Caribbean fisheries.

* Paddock et al. Recent Region-Wide Declines in Caribbean Reef Fish Abundance. *Current Biology*, 2009; DOI: 10.1016/j.cub.2009.02.041.

** Mumby, Peter et al., Thresholds and the resilience of Caribbean coral reefs. *Nature* 450, 98-101 (1 November 2007).

*** Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (2007) (50 CFR 600.815).

**** 16 USC 1856 Sec. 306 97-453

FACT

Data from all islands have been used to determine the status and fishing level of each species.* Fishery management decisions must be based upon the best available science, which means that by law, managers can't wait for more studies to make decisions.

Pollution from businesses, runoff and other sources are concerns for the marine environment. But studies prove overfishing is the major cause of the decline of fish populations and of the coral reef—both of which the islands depend upon for their economies and well-being.**

Twenty-two species in the Caribbean are currently undergoing overfishing, meaning they are being killed faster than they can reproduce. Due to chronic overfishing throughout the country, the U.S. Congress passed new laws mandating an end to overfishing by 2010.

Over-exploited fish populations yield lower catches than healthy, sustainable fisheries. In the long run, science-based catch limits should provide more food, jobs and recreation for everyone.

The U.S. government is obligated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to manage fish populations in U.S. waters.*** The secretary of commerce is empowered to enforce those regulations in territorial or federal waters.****



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