

Pew Environment Group's  
Public hearing testimony  
St. Thomas, USVI  
July 21, 2010

My name is Sera Harold Drevenak and I am representing the Pew Environment Group's Campaign to End Overfishing. I want to thank the Caribbean Fishery Management Council for hearing public testimony on these important amendments. These new measures should ensure that we have healthy and vibrant fisheries well into the future.

First, we want to express our support for approving the amendment with the preferred alternatives. 40 years of fisheries management has taught us that failures are most often the result of risky choices. We feel that the preferred alternatives chosen to date are appropriate and take into consideration issues raised by local fishermen (like separate ACLs for each island) and by scientists (like the need for at least a 25% buffer for uncertainty).

We are enormously supportive of the renewed efforts to collect more data and increase monitoring both federally and at the Territorial level. The requirements to end and prevent overfishing and set fishing limits based on scientific advice have focused renewed attention and resources on data collection efforts in this region. While these efforts will not yield results overnight, we feel that the Territorial governments along with NOAA are taking positive steps forward. Once new data collection and monitoring systems come online, the Council may need to make some adjustments to the catch limits proposed in this amendment to ensure that overfishing is prevented and depleted populations are on track to achieve full recovery. This kind of adaptive management makes sense as new information on fishing effort, landings and population health becomes available.

3,800 people from the Virgin Islands and from around the Country have written to the Council in support of these rules. They include concerned locals, visitors to these islands, sea food aficionados, fishermen, and wildlife advocates. And the message is simple. Imperiled fisheries cause harm both to the marine environment, and to the human populations of our islands who depend on the ocean. Healthy rebuilt fisheries will produce greater yields in the commercial fishing sector, greater opportunities for enjoyment of recreational fishing, and more local seafood for visitors and residents alike.

We join with the stakeholders represented in these letters to urge the Council to proceed without delay to enact annual catch limits and accountability measures for the region's fisheries.

Thank you again for your time, and we look forward to working with the Council and fishermen to achieve robust, sustainable Caribbean fisheries that support fishing jobs, tourism, and provide fresh-caught local seafood for generations to come.