



## Ecosystem Status Report for the U.S. Caribbean



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Fisheries Science Center  
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# 1. Executive Summary

Here is where we will paste the executive summary

## **2. Introduction**

### **2.1. About this report**

This report is for the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC). The purpose of this report is to synthesize ecosystem and socioeconomic information to help the CFMC better meet fishery management objectives. This report relied on both previously identified proposed indicators as well as expert vetting to select a suite of indicators that best address the fishery management plan (FMP) objectives for the U.S. Caribbean. Information in this report is organized into two sections: tracking performance toward fishery management objectives and potential risks to meeting fishery management objectives. The style of this report is based on the 2023 State of the Ecosystem Reports for the Northeast U.S. Shelf.

### **2.2. Report structure**

The CFMC's Science and Statistical Committee, as well as the region's Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management Technical Advisory Panel (EBFM TAP), recently completed a series of conceptual models linking key components of the ecosystem and human activities related to fishing. This report used these conceptual models as a starting list of proposed indicators and matched the indicators to answer FMP objectives when possible. For those objectives that did not have an immediate conceptual model-identified indicator, this report used a decision matrix process for expert vetting (Figure 1).

This decision matrix was composed of a list of proposed indicators compiled from the conceptual models as well as proposed indicators provided via expert input. These potential indicators were vetted and edited by expert small working groups, who then scored a decision matrix (Figure 2) of potential indicators against the following decision criteria: long term data availability, measurability, sensitivity to environmental changes, specificity, spatial and temporal scalability, relevance to specific FMP objectives, and responsiveness to management actions.

## Process for Caribbean ESR

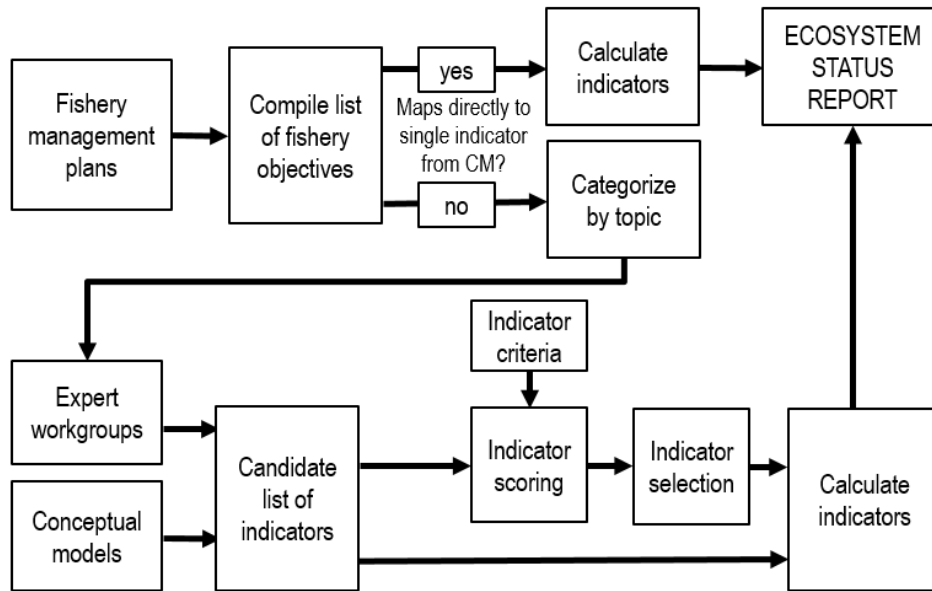


Figure 1: Process for selecting indicators for the U.S. Caribbean Ecosystem Status Report

## 2.2 Notes on interpreting time series figures

Time series data are plotted in a standardized format for ease of interpretation (e.g., Figure 2). The x-axis represents the temporal dimension, which may be monthly, yearly, or irregular time steps, and the y-axis represents the indicator value in units specified in the axis label. The dashed horizontal line represents the mean indicator value across the entire time series, and the solid horizontal lines denote the mean plus or minus one standard deviation. Red shaded areas and green shaded areas show years for which the indicator value is below or above one standard deviation from the mean, respectively. The blue vertical shaded box highlights the last five years of indicator values, over which additional metrics are calculated. Black circles to the right of each figure indicate whether the indicator values over the last five years are greater (plus sign), less than (minus sign), or within (solid circle) one standard deviation from the mean of the overall time series. Arrows to the right of each figure indicate whether the least squares linear fit through the last five years of data produces a positive or negative slope that is greater than one standard deviation (upward or downward arrows respectively), or less than one standard deviation (left-right arrow).



## 2. Introduction

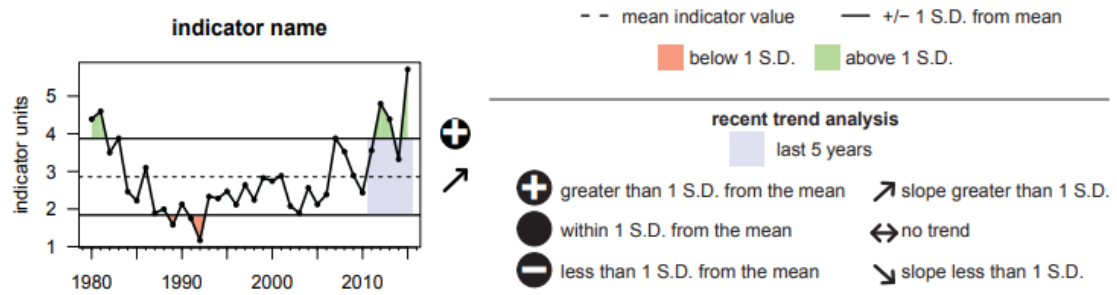


Figure 2: Example time series plot, showing an indicator plotted with its mean and standard deviation, and trend analysis for the most recent five years of data. See text for more detailed description of specific calculations.

### **3. Fishery management plan objectives and conceptual models**

This report's indicator selection process sought to select indicators that corresponded to the island based fishery management plan (FMP) objectives in order to track performance, and also selected indicators related to risks to meeting these management objectives. The following figure shows indicators selected per FMP objective. Indicators were also sourced and considered from the conceptual model exercise completed by the Council's Science and Statistical Committee and District Advisory panels, which began in 2019. Top scored connections in ecosystem components were considered in the ESR indicator suite as well (Rivera et al, in publication).

### 3. Fishery management plan objectives and conceptual models

| FMP Objective  | Col2  | Col3   | Col4 | Col5 | Col6 |
|--|---|--|------|------|------|
| Objective 1: Provide for long-term sustainable use of fisheries resources within the limits of local ecosystem production using a precautionary, ecosystem-based approach to management that accounts for uncertainty and relevant biological, ecological, economic, and social factors in the fishery, including the benefits of <b>food production, recreational opportunities, and protection of marine ecosystems. Prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks, and achieve OY on a continuing basis.</b> | Total commercial landings, lobster landings, conch landings | Sustainability of economically important reef fish-FID from RVC on mutton, yellow-tail, red hind, and queen trigger-fish |      |      |      |
| Objective 2: Reduce bycatch and waste in the fishery.  |   |  |      |      |      |
| Objective 3: Ensure the metrics upon which OY is based are derived from the best available scientific information and are updated continuously every five years to respond to changing ecological, biological, economic, and social conditions.  |   |  |      |      |      |
| Objective 4: Promote international and domestic cooperation in the management of pan-Caribbean stocks.   |   |  |      |      |      |

### 3. Fishery management plan objectives and conceptual models

| FMP Objective  | Col2 | Col3 | Col4 | Col5 | Col6 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Objective 5: Minimize conflicts between stakeholders by promoting <b>effective marine spatial planning</b>   |      |      |      |      |      |
| Objective 6: Promote <b>fair and equitable use of fishery resources</b> , recognizing the importance of those resources to fishing communities within the context of differences in local environment, culture, markets, user groups, gears, and seafood preferences.        |      |      |      |      |      |
| Objective 7: Establish resource access permits as necessary and appropriate to facilitate data collection, sustainability, and long-term yield.  |      |      |      |      |      |
| Objective 8: Provide flexibility in the management process which minimizes regulatory delay and allows for rapid adaptation to <b>changing resource abundance, availability, health, or preference</b> , using the best available scientific and socio-economic information. |      |      |      |      |      |

### 3. Fishery management plan objectives and conceptual models

| FMP Objective   | Col2 | Col3 | Col4 | Col5 | Col6 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| Objective 9: Devise a regulatory framework that maximizes the <b>efficiency and efficacy of enforcement efforts</b> within and across jurisdictional boundaries while promoting the safe conduct of fishing operations.                   |      |      |      |      |      |
| Objective 10: Promote <b>awareness of laws and regulations governing marine resource management</b> and the science and social obligations that support that management, and to ensure informed public input into the management process. |      |      |      |      |      |
| Objective 11: Ensure the <b>socioeconomic health of the fishing communities</b> dependent on federal fishery resources.   |      |      |      |      |      |
| Objective 12: <b>Protect spawning aggregations and, when needed, the habitats</b> supporting those aggregations to ensure the future health of the resource.  |      |      |      |      |      |

### 3. Fishery management plan objectives and conceptual models

| FMP Objective   | Col2 | Col3 | Col4 | Col5 | Col6 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| <p><b>Objective 13: Describe and identify EFH, adverse impacts on EFH, and other actions to conserve and enhance EFH.</b> Adopt management measures that minimize adverse impacts from fishing on EFH and promote habitat conservation, including designation of specific habitat areas of particular concern within EFH for more focused management action.</p> <p><b>Objective 14: Map, define, and manage habitat</b> upon which the resource depends, with particular emphasis on coral reef resources throughout the region.</p> <p><b>Objective 15: Ensure continued provision of ecosystem services derived from living marine resources,</b> including adequate abundance of forage resources to ensure a healthy and diverse trophic web.</p> <p><b>Objective 16: Account for ecological relationships and functional roles of species in the fishery</b> that contribute to a healthy ecosystem, such as grazers, forage fish, habitat-builders, and top predators.</p> |      |      |      |      |      |

### 3. Fishery management plan objectives and conceptual models

| FMP Objective  | Col2 | Col3 | Col4 | Col5 | Col6 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Objective 17: Require essential scientific data is gathered and analyzed in advance to guide the development of new fisheries to ensure they are sustainable from the start. |      |      |      |      |      |
| Objective 18: Promote measures to develop and sustainably manage underutilized marine fishery resources.   |      |      |      |      |      |

## **5. Tracking performance toward fishery management objectives**

In this section, we examine indicators related to broad, ecosystem-level fishery management objectives.

### **5.1 Food production**

#### **Fishery independent surveys of economically important species**

Indicator 16

#### **Commercial landings**

Indicator 17

#### **Maximum length and size structure**

Indicator 18

#### **Changes in target species / landing composition**

Indicator 20

### **5.2 Socioeconomic health**

#### **Total, lobster and conch revenues**

Indicator 21



## 5. Tracking performance toward fishery management objectives

### Total, lobster and conch trips

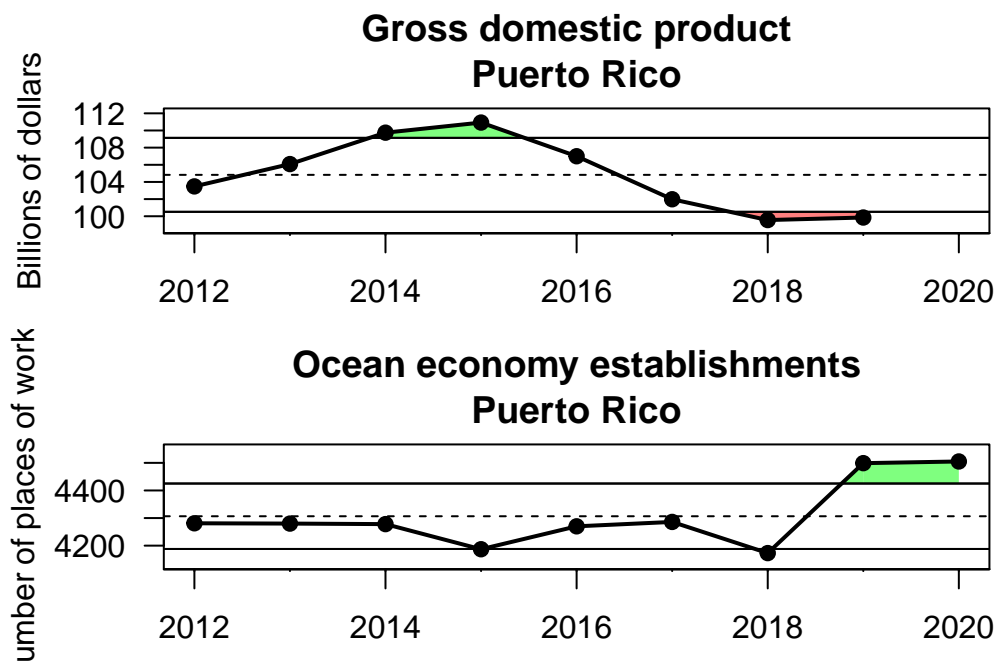
Indicator 22

### Ocean economy employment and wages

Indicator 23

Loading required package: viridisLite

Try `help(fields)` to get started.



### GDP

Indicator 24

## 5. Tracking performance toward fishery management objectives

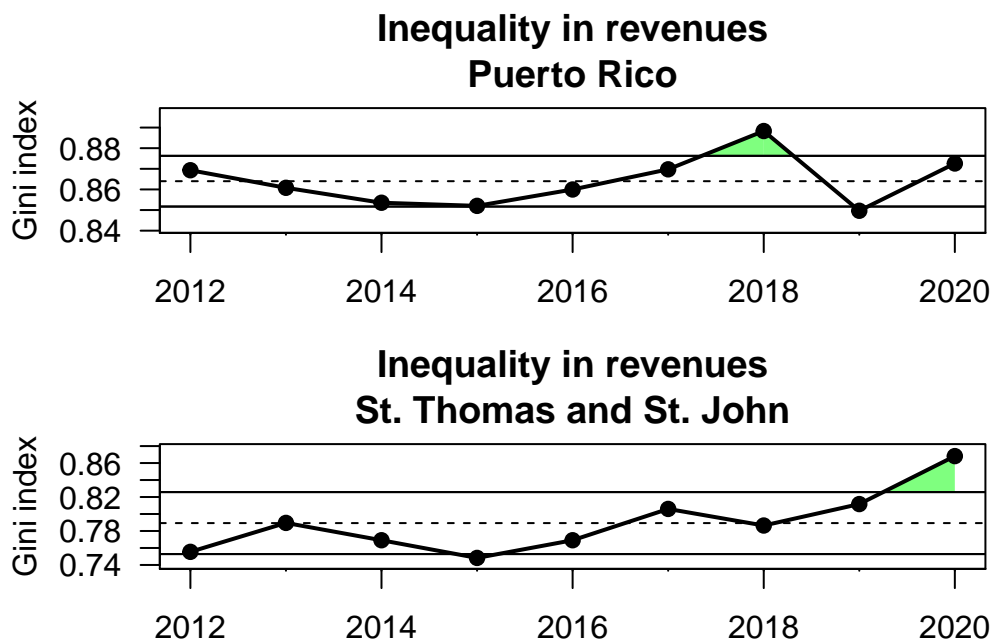
### Unemployment

Indicator 25

### 5.3 Equity

#### Gini coefficient for distribution of landings and revenue

Indicator 26



#### Commercial fishing community engagement and reliance

Indicator 27

*5. Tracking performance toward fishery management objectives*

**5.4 Engagement and participation**

**Recreational fishing engagement and participation**

Indicator 28

**Commercial fishing engagement and participation**

Indicator 29

**5.5 Bycatch reduction**

**Changes in gear type**

Indicator 30

**5.5 Governance**

**Number of seasonal closures implemented**

Indicator 31

**Number of education and outreach events**

Indicator 32

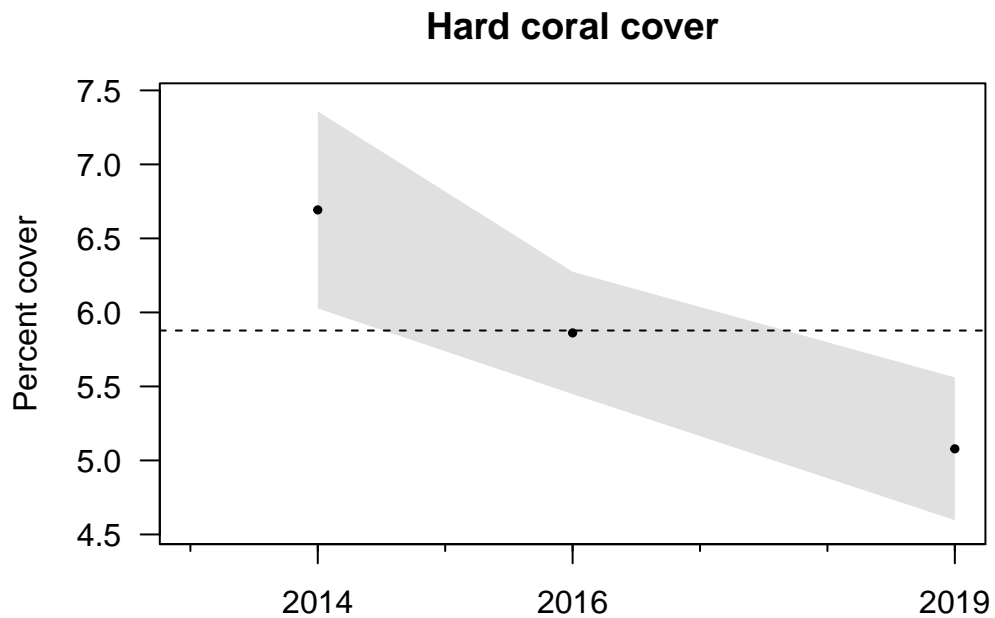
**Number of enforcement actions**

Indicator 33

## 5.6 Protection of ecosystems

### Percent coral cover and coral species richness

Indicator 34



### Coral species diversity

Indicator 35

## 4. Risks to meeting fishery management objectives

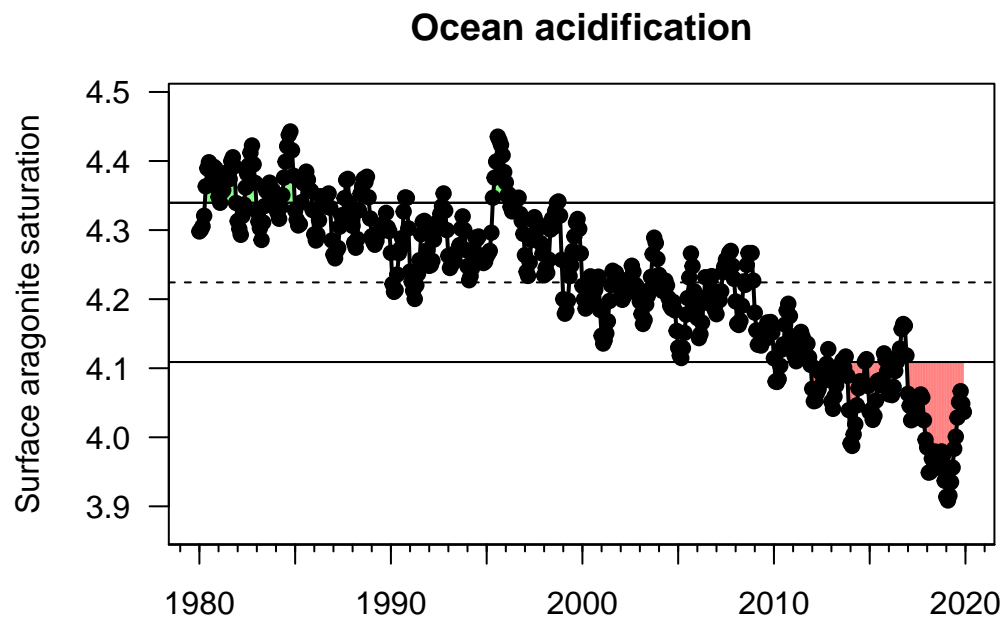
### Degree heating weeks

Indicator 1

DegreeHeatingWeeks.RData doesn't work

### Ocean acidification via aragonite saturation state

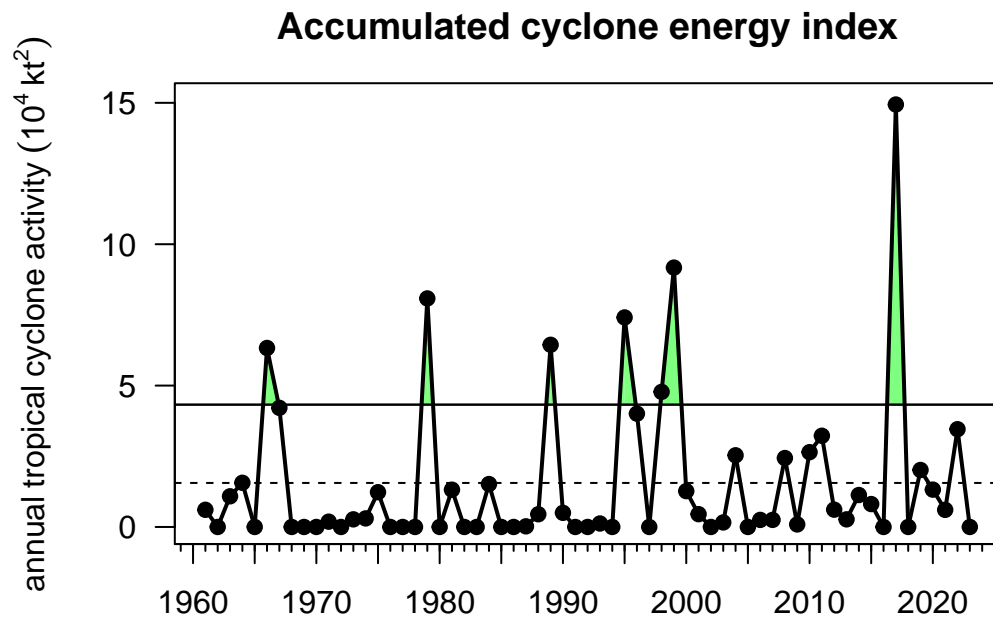
Indicator 2



#### 4. Risks to meeting fishery management objectives

##### Hurricane activity

Indicator 3



##### Turbidity

Indicator 4

turbidity.RData doesn't work

##### Sea surface temperature

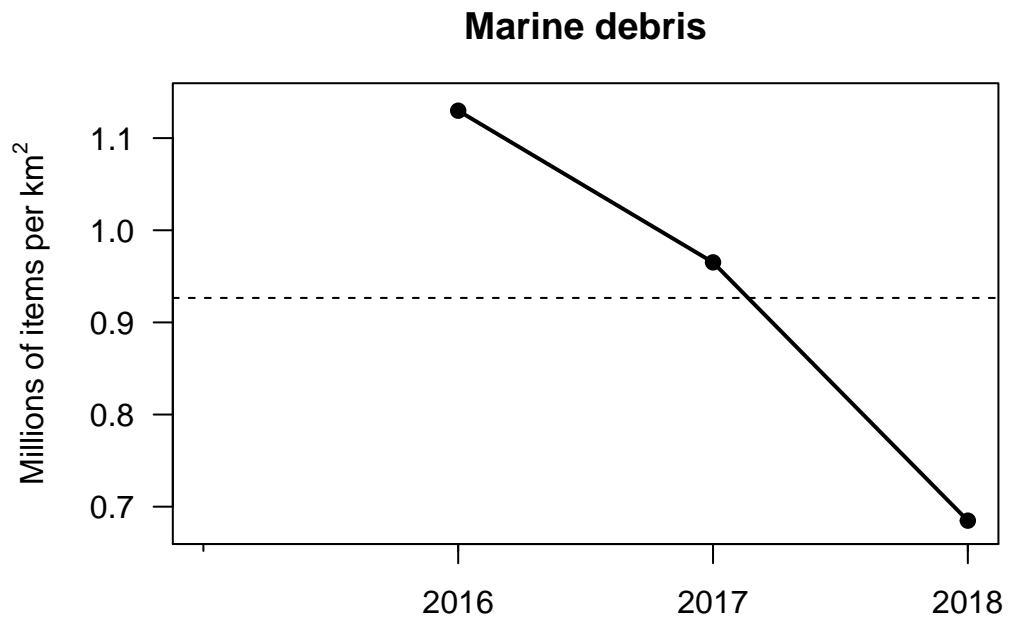
Indicator 5

No RData file for SST

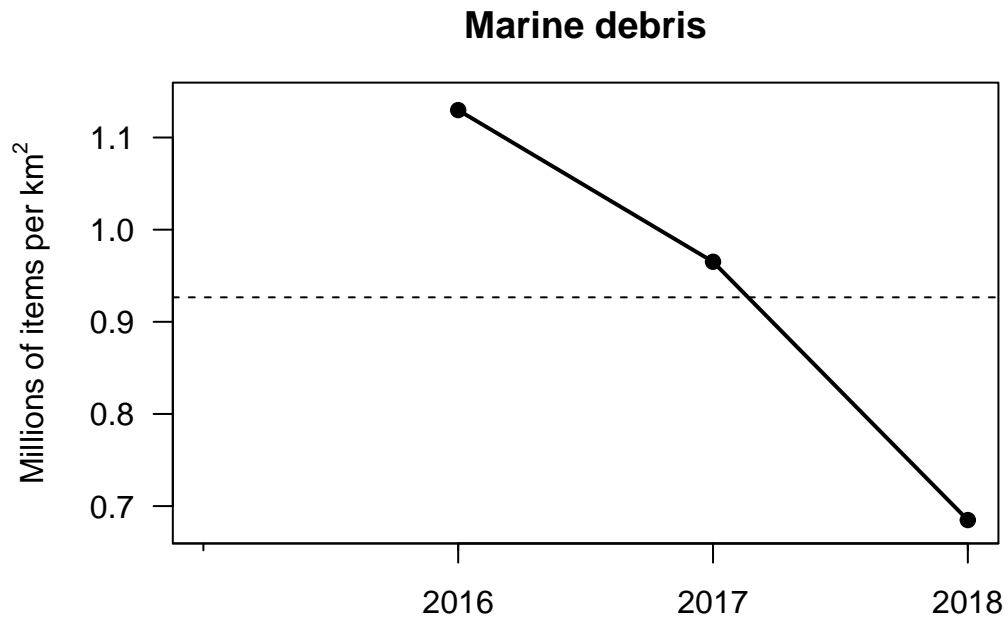
#### 4. Risks to meeting fishery management objectives

##### Marine debris

Indicator 6



#### 4. Risks to meeting fishery management objectives



#### Identified point source pollution sites

Indicator 7

#### Primary productivity via ocean color

Indicator 8

carib\_Ch1.RData doesn't work

#### Coastal development via land cover

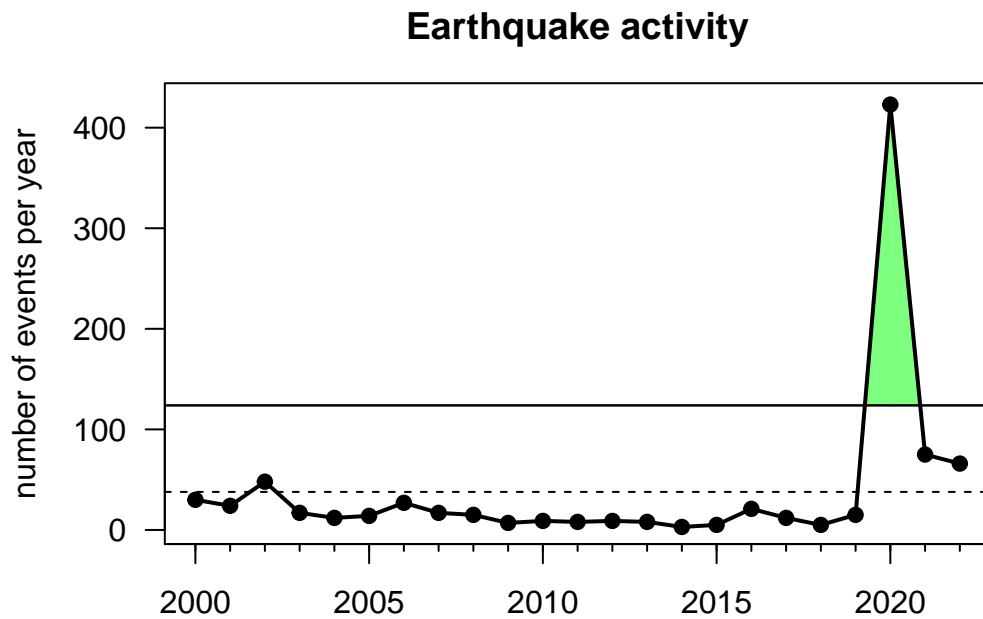
Indicator 9



#### 4. Risks to meeting fishery management objectives

##### Number of major earthquakes

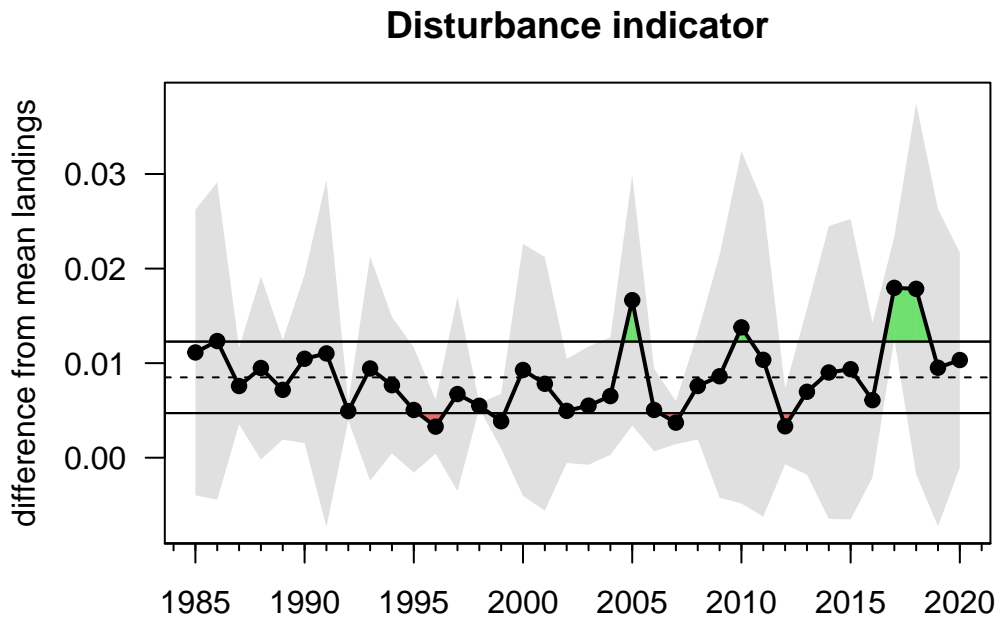
Indicator 10



##### Fishery/market disturbance indicator (maybe belongs in socioeconomic health)

Indicator 11

#### 4. Risks to meeting fishery management objectives



#### Sargassum inundation

Indicator 12

doesn't work

```
load("indicator_objects/Sargassum.RData") plotIndicatorTimeSeries(inddata, coltoplot = 1:2, plotrownum = 2, trendAnalysis = F, sublabel = T)
```

```
load("indicator_objects/sargassum_innundation_monthly_mean_hu.RData") plotIndicatorTimeSeries(inddata, coltoplot = 1:2, plotrownum = 2, trendAnalysis = F, sublabel = T)
```

#### Tourism via hotel occupancy

Indicator 13

doesn't work

```
load("indicator_objects/hotel_occupancy_rates_USVI_and_PR.RData") plotIndicatorTimeSeries(inddata, trendAnalysis = F)
```

#### *4. Risks to meeting fishery management objectives*

```
load("indicator_objects/hotel_occupancy.RData")      plotIndicatorTimeSeries(inddata,  
trendAnalysis = F)
```

#### **Population density**

Indicator 14

#### **Population change**

Indicator 15

## **6. Integrated ecosystem perspectives**

Stoplight plot (maybe this should be in the beginning material)

## **7. Research Recommendations**

**Data gaps**

## **8. Acknowledgements**

## 9. Contributors

**Editors** Mandy Karnauskas, Carissa Gervasi

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## 9. References



## **10. Data source table**