

**Fishing Vessel Circular Letter No. 036**

**27 January 2021**

**Series: RFMO-2021**

To: All Ship Owners, Operators, Deputy Registrars, Resident Agents, Representatives and other Stakeholders

Subject: **CONSERVATION OF SHARKS CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES MANAGED BY REGIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS**

Reference: Issued in accordance with Part VIII, Section 50(1)(c) of the High Seas Fishing Act, 2013

Circular Superseded: FVC-08/2011

**BACKGROUND:**

Sharks are considered one of the top ocean predators and play an important role in the food web as they help to maintain balance in the ocean's ecosystem. However, concerns have been heightened due to the increased demand and exploitation rates for some shark species and products.

Compared to other marine species, sharks are known for their slow growth rate and late sexual maturity. As a result, many sharks are vulnerable to overfishing. Sharks are captured in directed, non-directed and bycatch fisheries. Many shark species have been overexploited because their fins are considered highly valuable. In addition, there is a general lack of data reporting on catch of sharks, particularly species-specific data. Many countries continue to fail to adopt shark specific regulations to better manage these species and for these reasons, sharks present many challenges for fisheries conservation and management.

**MEASURES ADOPTED BY BELIZE**

Vessel owners and operators that harvest sharks either directly, indirectly or by-catch shall ensure that they utilize their entire catches of sharks. Full utilization is defined as retention by the fishing vessel of all parts of the shark, except the head, guts and skins, to the point of first landing.

Shark finning is prohibited for all operation geared toward directed, in-direct or by-catch of sharks. This shall apply to all sharking fining, whether for economic exploitation or crew consumption purposes. Shark carcasses are to be landed with fins naturally attached to shark bodies to the point of first landing. This Circular hereby prohibits fining at sea and the possession, transfer or landing of fins not naturally attached to the shark carcass. Pursuant to this Circular it will be illegal to possess, sell, offer for sale, take, purchase or barter, transport, export, trade or distribute imported shark fins that have been removed from shark carcasses before they have been landed at port.

In fisheries that are not directed at sharks, vessel owners and operators shall ensure the release of any live sharks, especially juveniles, to the extent possible, that are caught incidentally and are not used for food and/or subsistence.

## **APPLICABILITY**

This circular applies to all Belize flagged fishing vessels.

## **MAINTENANCE**

Stakeholders shall ensure that this Circular is acknowledged and observed.

## **COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT**

Failure to comply with any Circular shall result in disciplinary actions taken in accordance with Belize's Sanction Regulations S.I. 32 of 2014

## **IMPLEMENTATION**


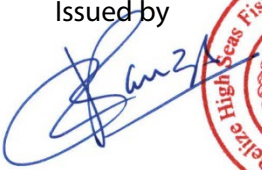
This Circular shall be implemented with immediate effect.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For more information direct all inquiries about this Circular to the Director of High Seas Fisheries of the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit, Ministry of Finance, Government of Belize.

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Issued by



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