

Fishing Vessel Circular Letter No. 042

16- May 2022

Series: GEN-2022

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

Subject: **PROHIBITION ON THE USE OF DRIFTNETS IN FISHING ACTIVITIES**

Reference: High Seas Fishing Act, 2013

Issued in accordance with Part VIII, Section 50(1)(c) of the High Seas Fishing Act, 2013, Section 12(8)

Circular Superseded: FVC-10-03-Large Scale Pelagic Driftnets

## **BACKGROUND:**

Driftnets are an extremely destructive fishing method and are used to snare fish by their gills in pelagic, open water situations. Because driftnets are not very selective of species their use results in a large by-catch of non-target fish, sharks, turtles, seabirds, and marine mammals which are usually discarded, dead back into the ocean, depleting the ocean's population.

Fishing vessels with large scale driftnets on the high seas or configured to conduct large-scale high seas driftnet operations has the capacity to take species of concern to the RFMOs and is likely to undermine the effectiveness of conservation and management measures. These vessels are also interacting more frequently with highly migratory species, such as tunas, swordfish, sharks, and other species; and that associated "ghost fishing" by lost or discarded driftnet have serious detrimental effects on the marine environment.

## **MANAGEMENT MEASURES**

The use of driftnets on the high seas is strictly prohibited by Belize flagged fishing vessels.

The use of driftnet fishing within the EEZ of another State shall only be allowed at the discretion of the Director of High Seas Fisheries and where a written approval for the use of driftnets have been provided to the vessel owner/operator by the respective State.

Owners and/or operators of Belize flagged fishing vessels caught utilizing driftnets on the high seas or within the EEZ of another State without proper authorization will be deemed to have breached national and international conservation and management measures and will be liable to disciplinary measures.

## APPLICABILITY

This Circular applies to Belize licensed fishing vessels operating in the high seas or within the jurisdiction of another State.

## 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 take effect immediately.

## 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



**VALARIE LANZA**

Director of High Seas Fisheries

[Director@bhsfu.gov.bz](mailto:Director@bhsfu.gov.bz)

[Valerie\\_lanza@bhsfu.gov.bz](mailto:Valerie_lanza@bhsfu.gov.bz)