

**Fishing Vessel Circular Letter No. 044**  
**02 August 2022**  
**Series: RFMO-2022**

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

Subject: **Harvesting of Blue Marlin and White Marlin in the ICCAT Convention Area**

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

Recommendation 19-05 by ICCAT to Establish Rebuilding Programs for Blue Marlin and White Marlin/Roundscale Spearfish

Circular Superseded: 018 – Dated 05-December 2016

**BACKGROUND:**

In 2019 the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) adopted Recommendation 19-05 to strengthen the plan to rebuild blue and white marlin based on the advice from the Scientific Committee. The 2000 blue marlin stock assessment found that stocks were overfished and subsequent assessment in 2018 confirms that stock remains in a state of overfishing. The 2019 white marlin/roundscale spearfish stock assessment found that overfishing of these species is not occurring but that stocks remains overfished after more than 20 years.

In 2019 the SCRS advised that the total catches of blue marlin should be reduced to 1750 t or less to provide for at least a 40% chance of rebuilding by 2028 and that total catches of white marlin/roundscale spearfish should not exceed 400 t to support rebuilding.

**MANAGEMENT MEASURE ADOPTED BY ICCAT – Recommendation 21-09**

In accordance with the recommendation adopted by ICCAT, Members are encouraged to implement conservation and management measures to end overfishing of these species as soon as possible to rebuild stocks to their respective  $B_{msy}$  levels.

An annual limit of 1670 t and 355 t for white marlin/roundscale spearfish, respectively has been established beginning in 2020. Specific landing limits have been set for individual member States. All other States outside of a specific limitation shall restrict their landings to a maximum of 10 t for Atlantic blue marlin and 2 t for white marlin/roundscale spearfish combined.

## MANAGEMENT MEASURES ADOPTED BY BELIZE

To ensure full compliance with ICCAT Recommendation and considering the very small limits established for those countries not given an exact limit, including Belize, it is the decision of this Administration, that **the harvesting of blue marlin and white marlin/roundscale spearfish shall be prohibited as target or by-catch species.**

Vessel operators are instructed to utilize the Best Practices for the Safe Handling and Release of Incidentally Caught Blue Marlins and White Marlins/Round Scale Spearfish as outlined in our Fishing Vessel Notice 004 (Attached).

## APPLICABILITY

This circular applies to all Belize flagged fishing vessels fishing in the ICCAT Convention Area.

## 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

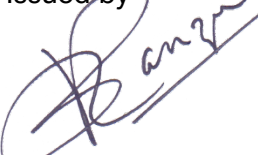
This Circular shall be implemented with immediate effect.

## 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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