



NOTICE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF OBSERVER PROGRAM

This Notice is about	Establishing measures in respect to the implementation of an at sea observer program
This Notice replaces	n/a
It is intended for	All Ship Owners, Operators, Charterers, Master and Crew, Deputy Registrars and Resident Agents
For more information	Direct any inquiries about this circular to the Director of the High Seas Fisheries of the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit, Ministry of Finance

BACKGROUND:

A fisheries observer program is responsible for providing the training and support necessary for deploying observers on board fishing vessels in order to collect the fisheries-dependent information essential to achieving the management objectives of the programme.

The observer program is necessary to provide the regulatory framework for the BHSFU to obtain the necessary scientific information to manage the sustainability of fisheries globally and to ensure the compliance with conservation and management measures adopted by regional fisheries management organizations as well as national legislations.

The three main objectives of an observer program are:

- **Scientific:** including stock (targeted and / or by-catch species) assessments and predictions of future fisheries exploitation of stocks. Observer duties include collection of catch composition and environmental / ecological information, and biological sampling of catch.
- **Monitoring control and surveillance (MCS):** including assessments of fishing and / or transshipment activities to ensure fisheries management measures are followed. Observer duties include verification of logbooks with fishing and / or transshipment activities and registering compliance with all regulations.

- Fisheries: including the objectives found in both scientific and MCS observer programmes. Observer duties also include the observer duties found in both scientific and MCS observer programs.

APPLICABILITY

Belize's observer program will come into force on 1st April 2014 and in accordance with our High Seas Fishing Act, 2013 all vessels shall be subject to observer coverage in accordance with the recommended percentage coverage of the area where vessels operate as well as any other percentage set and agreed by this Administration. Our regulation on monitoring, control and surveillance, which will be adopted shortly, will outline further the details of the program and the obligation of the owners, operators and crew to comply with this measure.

MAINTENANCE

Ship owners, operators and masters must ensure that this Fishing Vessel Circular is maintained on board their vessel and that the content is properly disseminated to all crew member including persons affected by or having an interest in the subject matter, in a language understood by all.

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 forthwith and shall remain in effect until further notification from this Administration.

Issued by

**Valarie Lanza,
Director of High Seas Fisheries**