

THE QUARTERLY CATCH

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Belize Joins the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO)

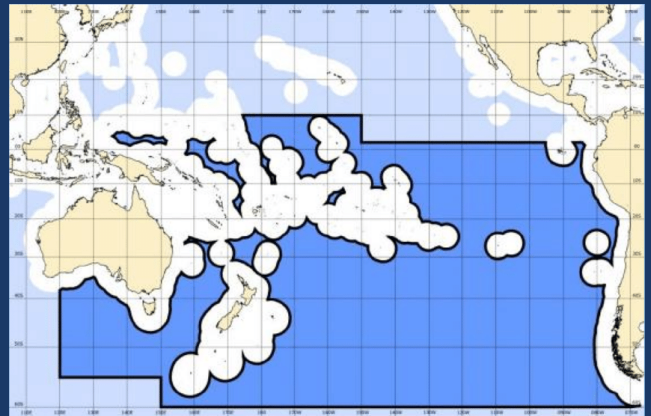
The Commission of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO) approved Belize's application for Cooperating non-Contracting party status on 24th January, 2022. As a result, Belize will now be an active Cooperating non-Contracting member of this Regional Fisheries Management Organization. Participation in this RFMO will provide Belize with a unique opportunity to expand its fishing fleet and fishing opportunities.



Exploratory and targeted commercial fishing is thought to have taken place in the area since the late 1970s, but it is only in 2012 that the SPRFMO was officially established and its convention entered into force on 24th August 2012.



The South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization is an inter-governmental organization that safeguards the marine ecosystems that support fisheries resources in the South Pacific Ocean. The SPRFMO Convention regulates high seas fisheries of Jack Mackerel, Chub Mackerel, and Jumbo Flying Squid in the Southeast Pacific and deep-sea species in the Southwest Pacific.



Except as otherwise provided, the SPRFMO Convention applies to waters of the Pacific Ocean outside areas of national jurisdiction, generally south of 10° north and north of 60° south as indicated in the figure above. This equates to approximately a quarter of the Earth's high seas areas.

A Tribute to Sir Manuel Esquivel, KCMG, PC

By: Robert Robinson - Deputy Director



The Right Honorable, Doctor, Sir Manuel Amadeo Esquivel, KCMG, PC was the second Prime Minister of Belize and the first Opposition Party Leader to win a post independent, general elections. He started his career as a high school, math and physics teacher at his *alma mater*, Saint John's College before embarking on his political career; and became a founding member of the United Democratic Party (UDP) in 1973. This was an alliance of three political parties that were opposed to the ruling People's United Party (PUP). These two political parties continue to dominate the post-independence political landscape of Belize.

Born in Belize City on May 2, 1940, to musician parents Juan Pablo Esquivel and Laura Bolton-Esquivel, PM Esquivel would later raise his own family in his family home in Belize City. He was a devoted husband to his wife, Lady Kathleen Levy-Esquivel, and their children: David, Laura and Ruth. He received his high school education at St.

John's College like many prominent statesmen of his era and later obtained a Bachelor of Science in Physics from Loyola University New Orleans in the United States of America and a post graduate degree in Physics education at Bristol University in England. He would take his technocratic disposition with him throughout his political career being guided by the empirical evidence of facts and figures.

PM Esquivel served two terms on the Belize City Council from 1974 to 1980 and became the leader of the UDP in 1983. Although his introduction to national politics got off to a rocky start when he contested and lost the general elections for the Freetown constituency in 1979, he would go on to lead the UDP to an upset victory on December 17, 1984, for which he was dubbed "The Comet of Belize" by The New York Times. In 1985, Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II appointed him to her Privy Council, and he served as Prime Minister of Belize for two terms: first from 1984 to 1989, and then from 1993 to 1998. PM Esquivel loved his country and made some difficult decisions that would prove to safeguard Belize's developing economy at high personal stakes – losing re-elections and effectively ending his career in electoral politics. Although he resigned as leader of the UDP in 1998, he continued his life of public service as Senior Advisor to the Government with Ministerial rank and the Chairman of the Central Bank of Belize under successive UDP Administrations; and finally resigned from public service in March of 2014.

Sir Manuel spent his retirement with his children and grandchildren up to his passing on February 10, 2022. He was memorialized by Senator Darrel Bradley with these words "he was always well grounded in his belief in good governance, integrity, uprightness and public service. Everything about him represented the highest ideals of Belizean values. No one could challenge his integrity and the purpose for which he made any decision." His memory will certainly be etched in Belize's history as a great statesman

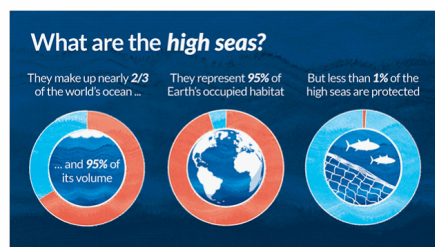
DID YOU KNOW?

The genesis of party politics in Belize was the formation of the People's United Party (PUP) in 1950. It won the first election contested after universal adult suffrage was introduced in 1954. The PUP, led by George Price, dominated politics for 30 years, until the United Democratic Party (UDP), formed by a coalition of small opposition parties in 1973, won the 1984 election under the leadership of Manuel Esquivel. Politics in Belize has since been dominated by these two parties, though the 2008 election saw three relatively new parties contesting.

Importance of Protecting Life on the High Seas

By: Ernie Howe-Fisheries Officer

The oceans occupy two-thirds of our planet's surface, with the high seas accounting for 64% of this vast expanse of water. States can access and enjoy freedoms on the high seas, including navigation, oversight, scientific research, and fishing, among others. However, no State can exercise jurisdiction over the high seas since the outer limit of a coastal State's jurisdiction can only extend up to 200 nautical miles from their shoreline at low-tide elevation. These areas beyond national jurisdiction provide habitats for countless migratory and trans-boundary species including whales, sharks, tuna, seabirds and turtles. Unfortunately, the vast ecosystems and biodiversity in the high seas remain unprotected with less than 1% of our high seas under protection¹. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that 84.4 million tonnes of global fish production came from marine capture in 2018. This is a clear indication that States have been exercising their rights to fish on the high seas, so it is equally important for them to cooperate with other States in the conservation and management of those living resources.



The lucrative nature of high seas fishing are seemingly as vast as the very oceans; however these living marine resources, though renewable, are susceptible to annihilation from human activities. These threats include pollution, illegal,

unreported and unregulated fishing, mining, piracy, and climate change among others. Fishing vessels venture further out into the oceans to harvest the living marine resources of the the high seas. They use sophisticated fishing gear and equipment which increases the efficiency of their activities; sometimes to the detriment of the very resources they exploit. Technologies such as FADs cause further degradation of the resources as it can cause over-exploitation of vulnerable species as well as an increase in incidental by-catch. Lately, evolving ocean uses such as oil exploration and mining and climate change also present a risk to vulnerable marine ecosystems and the general health of the high seas.

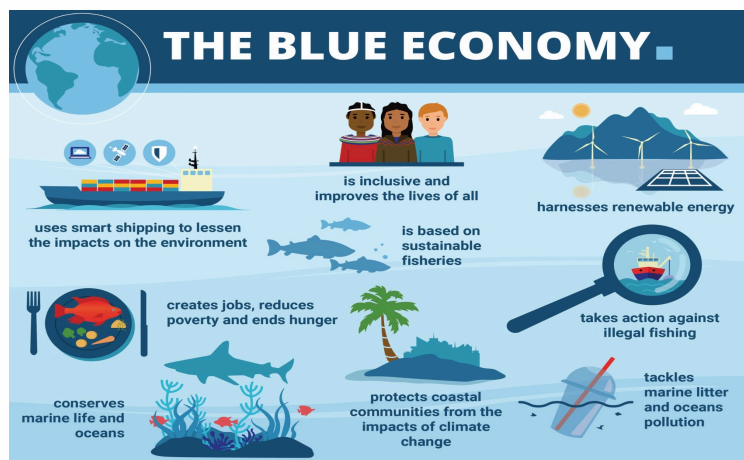
Currently, there exist no international legal framework which provides for effective and comprehensive protection of the high seas. The only obligation for States that exercises their freedom to fish on the high seas is to cooperate to conserve and manage its living marine resources under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Although there exists a collage of international and regional agreements and arrangements, there still exist major gaps for the protection of the oceans' living resources and ecosystems. In the absence of an effective legal framework, human activities will continue to threaten marine ecosystems and biodiversity. Therefore, it is essential that new treaties be developed and implemented as soon as possible so that the biodiversity of the high seas can be protected.

¹B.C. O'Leary et al., "Effective Coverage Targets for Ocean Protection," Conservation Letters 9, no. 6 (2016): 398-404, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/conl.12247>; N.J. Gownaris et al., "Gaps in Protection of Important Ocean Areas: A Spatial Meta-Analysis of Ten Global Mapping Initiatives," Frontiers in Marine Science 6, no. 650 (2019)

Challenges and Limitations of a Blue Economy

By: Delice Pinkard- Senior Fisheries Officer

Blue economy has evolved as a new narrative as economies around the world embark on remarkable changes in economic, strategic and geopolitical order. According to the World Bank, blue economy refers to the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihood, job opportunities, and the health of the ocean ecosystems. Nonetheless, the development of the blue economy comes with its challenges and limitations.



The blue economy is complex and multifaceted, encompassing a range of economic sectors and their respective regulatory frameworks. One of the most important challenges of blue economy is to understand and manage the many facets of sustainable ocean exploitation to achieve perpetual maximum economic benefit. Some key factors include ecosystem health, sustainable fisheries, and pollution, inter alia. The blue economy's many existing and emerging users tend to have varying spatial requirements and their cumulative impacts on the marine environment are often not fully understood. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges and limitations of developing a country's blue economy will be the cross-sectorial linkages and the integration and collaboration of the various stakeholders into a streamlined framework which optimizes the decision-making process and the implementation of management measures to optimize and safeguard the blue economy. This requires a variety of partnerships, restructuring of institutional frameworks and the development of a legal framework which addresses every dimension of the blue economy. This type of development is visionary in nature and requires ardent political will to realize this gargantuan undertaking. Managing the activities of all the sectors of a blue economy, both in space and time, is a complex challenge that will require robust and coherent policy frameworks. This is undoubtedly a tall order for any country seeking to develop its blue economy.

Implications of the Russia-Ukraine War for Global Shipping

by: Ian Constantino-Monitoring Officer

The war between Russia and Ukraine continues to shock the world with each passing day since Russian military invaded Ukraine on February 24th, 2022, in an unprovoked and unjustified act of war. As economies around the world are still recovering from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, this has only worsened the economic impact and delayed the recovery of the States' economies.

As most of the world has taken a unified stance to condemn the actions of Russia, levying economic sanctions on the country, the ripple effect has caused energy costs to soar since Russia is the world's third largest producer of oil. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported "rising energy prices and supply disruptions have resulted in higher and more broad-based inflation than anticipated, notably in the United States and many emerging market and developing economies." The maritime industry, which supports 80% of global trade by volume, is not immune to rising fuel prices and resultantly, will continue to foster high inflation. The fishing industry, as a part of the larger maritime industry, has been significantly affected by this conflict. Approximately 2,000 of the 44,000 cargo and tanker vessels in operation today have Russian owners which means that the activities of these vessels have been severely restricted by the sanctions.

Russian's invasion of Ukraine is disrupting an already strained global supply chain as shipping agents suspend nonessential trade of cargo to and from Russia. A quarter of the world's wheat trade and a fifth of the world's corn comes from Ukraine and the surrounding region. Since Russia's invasion, both countries have closed their ports and it is uncertain when the trade of these goods will resume. This translates to significant impacts on the availability and therefore costs of very basic commodities such as flour and other wheat products; adding to the increasingly high costs of goods and services caused by rising fuel prices.

As this war continues, consumers around the world should brace themselves for the ensuing global economic crisis. The cost of doing business is on the rise and it is logical and reasonable to expect that the cost of goods and services will be proportionate. Austerity will soon become the order of the day as the working-class struggle to survive and the marginalized become disenfranchised. While this future seems bleak, humanity is renowned for its ability to adapt and overcome some of the most difficult challenges as it continues to dream, innovate, and prevail.

In other news

ICCAT

On 9th December 2021, Belize issued Instrument of Ratification to the Protocol to Amend the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. The salient features of the amended Convention includes:

- The modernization of the Commission, which broadens the scope of the Commission's mandate to manage highly migratory oceanic and pelagic species such as cetaceans and elasmobranchs and to create the legal basis for the application of the precautionary and ecosystem approach to fisheries management.
- To clarify voting rules and quorum, in particular majority requirements in situations where consensus cannot be achieved.
- Define the principles under which the Commission shall act in carrying out its mandate.
- Streamline the Commission's decision making process to enable enhanced participation of Co-operating non-Contracting parties and fishing entities.
- Introduce a mechanism for the resolution of disputes to be entered into on a voluntary basis but having a final binding result on the parties to the dispute.

Ratification of this amended Convention demonstrates Belize's commitment to the continued sustainable management of species regulated by the ICCAT Commission and our dedication to the good governance of high seas fisheries.

Vessel Monitoring

We celebrate Belize's leadership to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by publicly sharing the data of their high seas fleet today.

Starting today, you will find 50+ Belize fishing vessels illuminated on our map, adding to Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama and Peru, whose fleets are also already visible, demonstrating that transparency drives better ocean management. We applaud Belize for its leadership as they pave the way for Caribbean cooperation and set a global challenge for others to follow suit.

Above article taken from the Facebook page of Global Fishing Watch, dated 25th March 2022.