

THE QUARTERLY CATCH

E-NEWSLETTER

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WELCOME....

Welcome to our fourth issue of the Quarterly Catch, the BHSFU quarterly E-Newsletter. I trust that every person who receives a copy of this newsletter will find it quite helpful, informative and of course entertaining. All the articles are researched, curated and tailored to what we think will be gratifying and useful to our readers. Thank You!!



Valarie Lanza-Director for High Seas Fisheries

BHSFU WELCOMES 2020 WITH A YEAR IN REVIEW

By: Valarie Lanza- Director for High Seas Fisheries

Hello and Happy New Year to all our readers. The new year is before us like a page in a new book and we are eager to start writing. As we enter 2020 the BHSFU looks back over the growth and momentum we have had over the past year and the enormous pride we have launching our E-Newsletter.

We are happy that with little under a year of introducing our E-Newsletter we have been able to bring you informative and up-to-date information on what is happening in the fishing industry.

Before we jump into 2020 lets look back at the most memorable moments of last year.

- Belize through the hard work of our fishing industry and the commitment of our government have ranked as one of the top best performing countries in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- We have launched a new logo on the heels of our re-branding initiative.
- We have expanded the institutional capacity of our Unit through continued studies and training.
- We have signed the convention amendment for the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and the Terremolinos Declaration to Promote Safety of Fishing Vessels.

- We have collaborated with local agencies such as the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute, OCEANA, the Directorate of Trade, inter alia and have successfully built closer relationships with our sister companies, the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize, Belize International Corporate Affairs Registry and the International Financial Services Commission.
- We have continued to actively participate in the meetings of the Regional Fisheries Management Organization to which we subscribe (ICCAT and IATTC) and have maintained overall compliance with these organizations thereby ensuring our vessels continued operation in these ocean areas.
- Evaluation of the high seas fishing vessels' operations has shown a 95% compliance level.

I hope you have enjoyed the last year of our Newsletter. We love this industry and it shows on the pages of this Newsletter, our website and social media outlets. We aim to continue our success in 2020 and bring you a diverse array of articles about whats happening in the world of high seas fisheries.

This new year marks a new beginning with new opportunities. From all of us at the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit we extend our warm wishes for a prosperous New Year 2020.

Belize Signs the Torremolinos Declaration on the Safety of Fishing Vessels

By: Robert Robinson - Deputy Director



The International Maritime Organization (IMO), in conjunction with the Government of Spain and with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and The Pew Charitable Trust, hosted a Ministerial Conference on Fishing Vessel Safety and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in Torremolinos, Spain from 21 to 23 October 2019. The Conference was convened to promote the ratification of the Cape Town Agreement (CTA) for the treaty to enter into force by the tenth anniversary of its adoption (11 October 2012).

While the CTA is a key IMO treaty for the safety of fishing vessels, it has not yet entered into force as only 13 Contracting Parties with 1,421 fishing vessels have expressed their consent to be bound by the treaty. It will enter into force 12 months after at least 22 States, with an aggregate 3,600 fishing vessels of 24 m in length and over have adhered to it; and will provide international requirements for stability and associated seaworthiness, life-saving appliance, communication equipment, fire protection, and fishing vessels construction. Notably, fishing vessels exempt from international treaties

such as the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) which caters to safety for commercial shipping vessels including cargo and passenger ships due to the differences in design and operation between fishing vessels and other types of ships. While several voluntary and regulatory safety initiatives, including the STCW-F Convention, which entered into force in 2012, have reduced losses of life and property, fishing remains the most hazardous occupation at sea.

The first attempt to establish a binding international agreement for the safety of fishing vessels was the adoption of the 1977 Torremolinos International Convention. Its lack of support prompted the adoption of the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol amending the 1977 Convention. However, this was also unsuccessful, and the IMO prepared a new instrument of implementation. The 2012 Cape Town Agreement is a renewed commitment by the Organization to bring the provisions of the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol into force. If successful, the new binding regulatory regime is expected to play an important part for improving safety standards, reducing the loss of life in the fisheries sector, combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, improved working conditions, reduction of marine pollution, increased protection of polar waters and reduced risks for search and rescue services. The Torremolinos Declaration was signed by forty-eight (48) countries, including Belize, during the Conference. This Declaration is a non-binding document where the signatories pledge to promote the CTA and denounce the proliferation of IUU Fishing. IMO Member States have been urged to ratify the 2012 Cape Town Agreement in order to bring this treaty into force to enhance fishing vessel safety and reduce the burden of IUU Fishing.

Impacts of Fish Aggregating Devices on Tropical Tunas and Sustainable Fisheries

A Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) is mainly a man-made object made from either artificial or biodegradable materials that is placed within the ocean and is either anchored to the sea floor or drifting along the ocean's currents to attract pelagic tuna and tuna-like species. Vessels that utilize this unique device are Purse Seiners who target these species.

However, over the years, FAD designs have become more innovative and even more efficient in assisting vessels to catch large amounts of fish. Scientists have realized that the usage of FADs has created an issue where not only are adult tunas being caught but a large amount of juvenile tunas as well. This is due to the aggregation of different size species under the FAD. Although there is no effective way to stop the juveniles from aggregating under the device, scientists have recommended that the number of FADs utilized by these vessels be drastically reduced. With less active FADs in the ocean, there would be less juvenile mortality. Therefore, the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) have agreed to adopt more stringent control measures regarding FADs and have agreed to reduce the number of active FADs per vessel over the next few years. This reduction among other solid measures will hopefully help to rebuild the dwindling tuna stocks thus ultimately creating a balance for sustainable fisheries.



By: Delice Pinkard - Senior Fisheries Officer

Belize Participates in the 26th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)



(L-R): Robert Robinson, Delice Pinkard

The 26th Regular Meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) will be marked as one of the historic meetings of the Commission. Held in Palma de Mallorca, Balearic Islands, Spain from November 18th to 25th 2019, this meeting was successful in adopting a Protocol to amend the ICCAT Convention as well as a new multi-annual conservation and management measure for tropical tunas amongst others.

The Commission convened to evaluate the results of the 2019 working plan together with the current status of application of the regulatory measures in force and to establish the conservation and management measures for the future. Full scientific stock assessments were carried out for two species in 2019: yellowfin tuna and white marlin, while new projections were provided for the shortfin mako shark. In total, 12 new Recommendations and five Resolutions were adopted covering relevant issues on Atlantic tuna and tuna-like species conservation and fisheries management.

The Commission finalized the protocol to amend the Convention which modernizes the Commission and provides it with the mandate to manage oceanic, pelagic and highly migratory species of sharks and rays.

The new text, which was developed over the past six years, introduces the precautionary approach and an ecosystems approach to fisheries management and make provision for the participation of Fishing Entities and dispute resolution. Its entry into force will greatly enhance the Commission's ability to fulfil its fiduciary duties and obligations in the conservation and management of tuna and tuna-like species and sharks in the greater Atlantic Ocean and adjacent seas.

The multi-annual conservation and management programme for tropical tunas established total allowable catches for bigeye tuna of 62,500 tons and 61,500 tons for 2020 and 2021 and maintained the status quo of 110,000 tons for yellowfin. Several other measures were taken to reduce the fishing mortality of juvenile bigeye tuna and yellowfin tuna including a reduction in the maximum number of fishing aggregating devices (FADs) deployed by vessels and the prohibition of the use of FADs for two and three months in 2020 and 2021 respectively. Several conservation and management measures were adopted for sharks, with special attention to the shortfin mako; and for the first time, TACs for North and South Atlantic blue sharks has been established. The Commission also agreed on new rebuilding programs for blue and white marlin and roundscale spearfish; and the Compliance Committee has noted improvements in the overall compliance of the Members of the Commission.



Belize signs protocol to amend ICCAT Convention

At the close of the meeting, the Commission voted to extend the mandate of its officers for an additional two-year period. The meeting was attended by 680 delegates from 47 Contracting Parties, two cooperating non-contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities and observers from six non-contracting Parties, six international organizations and 22 Non-Governmental Organizations.

DID YOU KNOW?

The earliest overfishing occurred in the early 1800s when humans, seeking blubber for lamp oil, decimated the whale population. Some fish that we eat, including Atlantic cod and herring and California's sardines, were also harvested to the brink of extinction by the mid-1900s.



High Seas Transshipment and its Link to Illegal Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU)

By: Stanley Burgess - Fisheries Monitoring Officer

Transshipment on the High Seas has and will continue to be a major concern to Fisheries Monitoring Centers globally. Vessels converge at sea for numerous reasons such as refueling, crew transfer and food supply; however, in commercial fishing practices, they also meet to transfer catches or transship. Larger vessels such as refrigerated reefer vessels accumulate catch from multiple small fishing vessels and take it back to port. This enables fishing vessels to remain out at sea for longer periods which helps to reduce fuel cost and other operational expenses as well as ensuring that their catches reach their destination quicker. However, this practice also accounts for a number of illegal transshipments because it allows for the mixing of illegally caught fish with legitimate catches in addition to a number of other activities such as drug trafficking, forced labor, inter alia. This practice allows for illegally caught fish to enter commercial markets and does not allow for the accurate reporting of the amount of fish being taken from the sea thereby inhibiting the management of sustainable fisheries. Transshipment activities tend to occur in regions where there are insufficient management frameworks or along the borders of EEZ where there are high corruption rating and inefficient or non-existent monitoring.

For these reasons, transshipment is considered illegal and it is difficult to manage because it happens on the high seas far away from shore, in numerous locations and is disguised as other genuine activities. However, being able to identify when and where transshipment occur can help in reducing these illegal activities at sea. Belize's laws do not allow for transshipment on the high seas unless it occurs under the framework of a regional observer program approved by the Administration. This is a big step forward in reducing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing on the high seas.

Our FMC has been vigilant in our monitoring activities and finding alternatives to better track these activities. It is believed that technology will be bridging this gap allowing us to efficiently monitor high seas transshipment.



How Management Strategy Evaluation Aid in Fisheries Management

By Ernie Howe - Fisheries Officer

Fisheries management has changed significantly over the years. Inadequate results from traditional management systems have incited scientist and fisheries manager alike to come up with new tools to manage fisheries. As a result, scientists and fisheries managers have developed a management approach that allows for the assessment of the performance of alternative management strategies for reaching different management objectives. These new approaches offer a basis for decision-making by running simulations to imitate the operation of a fisheries system and test whether certain management plans (harvest strategies) are likely to achieve management and sustainable goals for a fishery. These systems are characterized as, management strategy evaluation (MSE), management procedures (MP) and harvest strategy (HS).

Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) is a process which evaluates the consequences of alternative management options, known as harvest strategies. MSE uses a simulation tool to determine how alternate harvest strategies perform given a set of pre-defined fishery objectives, considering the uncertainties in the system and how likely these harvest strategies are to achieve the chosen management objectives. The MSE is a simulation technique and uses an operating model to simulate the entire population and all fisheries, factoring in management decisions, the monitoring program, and potential ecosystem effects using a closed-loop simulation. This technique should assist decision makers in determining whether the objectives should be weighted differently. Specifically, to provide the information on which to base a rational decision, given objectives, preferences, and attitudes to risk. The MSE is an essential part of the process of developing and agreeing to a harvest strategy.

Ref: International Pacific Halibut Commission

DID YOU KNOW?

"Male sharks have a pair of external appendages along the inner margin of each pelvic fin known as "claspers". these grooved organs are used to deposit sperm into the posterior orifice, known as the cloaca, of the female during copulation for sexual reproduction."