

THE QUARTERLY CATCH

E-NEWSLETTER

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WELCOME....

Welcome to our fifth 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

TO ALL OUR READERS AROUND THE WORLD: COVID-19 MESSAGE

Together we are facing a truly extraordinary situation. Our thoughts are with you and your families during these uncertain times. This global Covid-19 pandemic is affecting all our families, businesses, communities and normal way of life. Now more than ever we can all appreciate just how small the world truly is and the importance of coming together to protect our global communities in times of great need.

First and foremost, our hearts go out to anyone who's been impacted by the virus, either directly or indirectly. Our thoughts are especially with those who are sick, to whom we extend our heartfelt wishes for a full recovery. We are truly moved by the self-sacrificing healthcare workers around the world who are on the front lines working tirelessly to care for people in need.

It is hard to navigate the unknown, but we want our readers to know that staying connected to others is more important than ever. We will continue reaching out through this medium to try and give you a sense of normalcy though the continued production of our newsletter.

We hope you and your families stay healthy, and we appreciate your support in keeping our global communities safe during these unprecedented times

BASIC PROTECTIVE MEASURES AGAINST COVID-19

The World Health Organization Recommends these basic protective measures against Covid -19

1. Wash your hands frequently

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.

2. Maintain social distancing

Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

3. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth

Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

4. Practice respiratory hygiene

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

5. Seek medical Attention

If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early. Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.

Stay informed and follow advice given by your healthcare provider

Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow advice given by your healthcare provider, your national and local public health authority or your employer on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

Birdseye View to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F), 1995

By: Robert Robinson - Deputy Director



Fishing is often regarded as one of the most dangerous professions because of the estimated 24,000 lives that are lost annually around the world during fishing operations. In an attempt to reduce this staggering statistic, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has adopted the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995 (STCW-F 1995). This Convention entered into force on 29 September 2012 and establishes the certification and minimum training requirements for the crew members of fishing vessels that are 24 meters in length and above. Much like the International Convention on the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) for seafarers on merchant vessels, the STCW-F seeks to improve the quality of education and training provided to personnel employed on fishing vessels; thereby reducing the number of casualties that are reported on board fishing vessels on a yearly basis. This is the first international convention that establishes basic requirements on training, certification and watchkeeping for persons employed on fishing vessels, and enhancing the standard of training will undoubtedly reduce accidents on fishing vessel, thus improving safety in the fishing industry and fishing vessel fleets.

Compared to the STCW Convention, the STCW-F is much shorter and consists of 15 Articles and an annex containing technical regulation in four chapters as outlined below: Chapter I – General Provisions; Chapter II – Certification of Skippers, Officers, Engineer Officers and Radio Operators; Chapter III – Basic safety training for all fishing vessel personnel; and Chapter IV – Watchkeeping.

It is important to note that although the STCW-F Convention does deal with manning issues on board fishing vessels, establishing minimum basic training for fishing vessel personnel will contribute to the reduction of casualties, and will go a long way to improve the present poor safety record of the global fishing industry. To date, the STCW-F Convention has been ratified by: Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Kiribati, Latvia, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, Palau, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine.

Ref: <<http://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/HumanElement/Pages/STCW-F-Convention.aspx>>

Photo credit: Francisco Blaha <<http://www.franciscoblaha.info/blog/2019/1/11/some-recent-developments-that-may-lead-to-positive-changes-on-labour-conditions-on-decent-vessels>>

A view on Deep-Sea Fisheries in the High Seas and its impact on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs)

Deep-Sea Fisheries are defined by the International Council of Exploration of the Sea (ICES) as fisheries in waters deeper than 400-500 meters. Vessels that normally target deep sea marine species are mid-water and bottom trawlers. However, the design and function of these fishing gears have proven to be quite damaging to the vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) such as seamounts which form unique ecosystems due to ocean current systems that bring in an abundance of phytoplankton and other nutrients, making it an optimal place for organisms to thrive. The impact of trawlers goes beyond the capture of fish as it drags on the seabed, remove sponges, corals, sea stars, sea cucumbers and anemones, all of which play important roles as food source or habitat for fish.



By: Delice Pinkard - Senior Fisheries Officer

Although, Belize currently has a relatively large number of mid-water trawlers, these trawlers operate mainly off the coast of West Africa's exclusive economic zones whose countries allow the usage of this fishing gear. Belize has a ban on the usage of gillnets and bottom trawling to help protect VMEs, however until there are substantial laws on how to improve the management of deep sea fisheries and ecosystems i.e. through the United Nations and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) then countries will continue to allow all types of trawling activities within their waters and in high seas.

With the imminent adoption of the UN policy 'Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction' (BBNJ), countries will strike a landmark deal to properly regulate and tackle the increasing pressures of fishing, mining and marine pollution on these VMEs. The adoption of this global policy is scheduled for early 2020.

SHOULD FISHING ON THIS HIGH SEAS BE PROHIBITED

By: Valarie Lanza - Director for High Seas Fisheries

Far beyond our shores lies the high seas – vast waters that stretch well outside our country’s jurisdiction and which seem to be the focus of many controversial discussions today. The high seas cover almost two-third of the world’s ocean surface which is now saturated with an increase in fishing and other related activities. Many are now advocating for a complete ban on high seas fishing including other activities such as deep-sea mining and deep-sea fishing which destroy life on the sea floor and threaten deep water ecosystems such as corals. By-catches or over-harvesting of vulnerable, depleted and or juvenile species are also of concern because they also threaten the sustainability of important fish stocks such as Bigeye Tuna.

The high seas is currently primarily managed by regional fisheries organizations such as ICCAT, IATTC, CCAMLR, SPRFMO to name a few but many believe that this is not enough and that a more stringent global agreement is needed to protect the high seas, marine protected areas (MPA) and other vulnerable marine ecosystems (VME) from destructive and unsustainable activities. However, on the contrary, banning of high seas fishing may put a strain on an already overextended global food supply especially in countries who are dependent on fishing as their main food source or whose exports generate revenues for economic development. More than 2.6 billion people depend on the ocean as their primary source of protein which yields more than 24 million tonnes or 16% of the global protein supply annually. Furthermore, economically, more than 3 billion

people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods with marine fisheries directly or indirectly employing over 200 million people. (Ref:<https://www.un.org/en/events/oceansday/background.shtml/>)

Restricting high seas fishing may cause an even greater global problem because it will lead to even more IUU fishing and will send fishers seeking another food source elsewhere shifting rather than diminishing the damage done to the ecosystem. It is important that we ensure a balanced level when it comes to the use of our marine resources. Banning high seas fishing will not necessarily allow the regrowth of stocks or protect the biodiversity of the high seas and it definitely wouldn’t improve food security in low income countries.

As small players in this industry, Belize is keen on ensuring that we retain a level playing field when it comes to high seas fisheries management. Ratifying and implementing the requirements of the management agreements such as the Fish Stocks Agreement, the Conventions of the relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) that manage areas of the high seas and cooperating with national, regional and international bodies is important in helping to manage fishing on the high seas. Under UNCLOS fishing on the high seas is a freedom given to all States but we all must do our part to ensure it remains sustainable for our future generation.

MONITORING CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE USING MODERN TECHNOLOGIES

By: Stanley Burgess - Fisheries Monitoring Officer

In this year and age, the use of more advanced technologies for Monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) should be the focal point for all FMCs and other monitoring agencies to help ensure that proper monitoring is done effectively and efficiently with the least amount of cost.

Technology has come a long way and has now been used to bridge the gaps in MCS efforts allowing authorities to engage in strengthened monitoring activities such as high seas transshipment, electronic reporting and at-sea observations, inter alia. Apart from tracking a vessel’s position some fisheries monitoring platforms can monitor and highlight the many areas on the high seas where transshipment activities are more prevalent and how these activities are carried out. These efforts include utilizing camera live feed to record events in real time. Utilizing camera live feeds can also aid in the observer programs making it less frequent for the need of an observer to be physically present on the vessel.

For developing countries like Belize, the use of these advanced technologies may not be readily available. Increasingly though, technology is developing to provide remote Electronic Monitoring with cameras at lower costs and is something that we may eventually have to capitalize.





The Role and Purpose of the Statistical Document Program in the RFMOs

By Ernie Howe - Fisheries Officer

Regional Fisheries Management Organizations on the recommendation of the Food and Agriculture Organization have adopted market related measures such as import prohibitions and documentation schemes in order to prevent IUU fishing from entering international trade. This tool has proven to be an effective mechanism in the prevention of IUU fishing.

The statistical document program introduced by the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) is used to enforce regional conservation and management measures which includes the mandatory prohibition of imports of fish from non-members whose vessels undermine the effectiveness of conservation and management measures, prohibition of imports from member countries who exceeds their catch limit and whether the fish was harvested in a manner consistent with the RFMO management measures. The document also acts as a traceability document providing the RFMOs with information on harvesting areas, time, quantities caught and exported.

The only way RFMOs can track trade and raise trade statistics in species and their derived products of which they oversee their fisheries is when they operate a trade tracking program such as the statistical documentation schemes.

Belize through our membership of several RFMOs consistently issues statistical documents for the trade of certain species caught in the convention areas of these RFMOs and which are exported to other member countries.



DID YOU KNOW?

The slowest fish is a seahorse. It swims so slowly that a person can barely tell it is moving. The slowest is the Dwarf Seahorse, which takes about one hour to travel five feet. It even looks like it is simply standing up, not swimming.

Seahorses are poor swimmers and can die of exhaustion in stormy waters.