



# THE QUARTERLY CATCH

## E-NEWSLETTER

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### WELCOME....

Welcome to our tenth issue of the Quarterly Catch, the BHSFU quarterly e-newsletter. We are now at the end of the second quarter of 2021 and while, for some of us, things have returned to a sense of normal, others still remain in lock down due to the continued surge in Covid cases. With the introduction of the vaccine in most countries, we are optimistic that it will bring an end to the pandemic. Nonetheless, we continue to bring to you our e-newsletter and hope you will find it enjoyable reading to pass the time as well as informative and of course entertaining. We reiterate that all our articles are researched, curated and tailored to what we think will be gratifying and useful to our readers.

Valarie Lanza - Director for High Seas Fisheries

## Building Partnerships to Strengthen Fisheries Management

*By: Robert Robinson - Deputy Director*

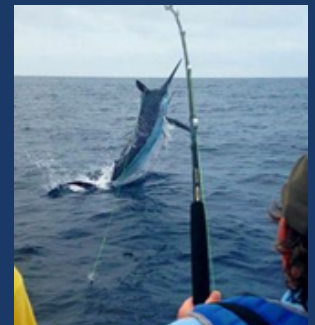
Located on the isthmus of Central America, Belize is also considered a Caribbean Country since its coastline is washed by the Caribbean Sea. Its idyllic location, tropical climate and sandy beaches make it a prime destination for tourists who seek to escape frigid climates in the winter or just relax on a beach and let the warm Caribbean Sea wash away the stresses of their daily lives.



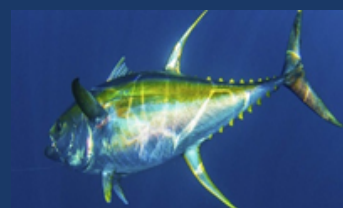
The development of Belize's tourism product has seen the industry rise to the rank of the foremost contributor to Belize's gross domestic product (GDP). As a tourist destination, Belize offers a plethora of attractions and activities to entertain its visitors, including sport and recreational fishing tours and tournaments. While fishing tours range from the flats which targets flat and bony fish (i.e. Tarpon, Bony Fish and Permit), deep-water fishing on the slopes interacts more with pelagic tuna and tuna-like species that are managed by International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). Although these fisheries are governed by a strict catch and release policy with few exceptions for retention of pelagic species, this attraction has far

reaching implications in the broader context of fisheries management and compliance with the international obligations of Belize vis-à-vis data reporting to the relevant regional fisheries management organization. Since Belize is a member of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), and because sport and recreational fisheries interact with ICCAT managed species, it is necessary to report these catches to the Commission. As an ICCAT Member State since July 19th, 2005, Belize is obliged to report the catches of all ICCAT regulated species to the Commission, including those originating from sport and recreational fisheries.

In order to fulfill this obligation, the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI), as the competent authority responsible for the management of sport and



recreational fishing, to collect data from this fishery for onward reporting to ICCAT. The inclusion of data from this fishery in Belize's national reports to the Commission will increase the accuracy of Belize's aggregate catches; and in turn will enhance



the data that guides the science in the management of these highly migratory and trans-boundary tuna and tuna-like species.



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**Together against Covid-19**

## Impact of Marine Waste on Our Oceans

By: Ernie Howe- Fisheries Officer

Marine waste or debris is defined as any solid material that is manufactured and later directly or indirectly tossed into our marine environment. Marine debris is a serious environmental issue, and poses a major threat to both marine and coastal environments. Marine debris has been identified as a global problem alongside other environmental issues such as climate change, ocean acidification and loss of biodiversity. Majority of these debris are presently covering our beaches, riverbanks, shorelines, and the high seas. The most common materials that make up marine debris are plastics, glass, metal, paper, cloth, rubber, wood and in some cases discarded fishing gears.



Photo courtesy: www.emodnet-humanactivities.eu

There are several impacts that marine waste can have on our oceans and the most common ones are economic loss, damage to habitat, wildlife entanglement, ingestion, and vessel damage. When these wastes or debris end up in our oceans, rivers, lakes or even our beaches, it can trigger a negative impact especially for us in Belize since we depend highly on tourism hence resulting in an economic loss to our country.

Another impact caused by marine waste is the damage to habitat such as coral reefs. Many of these habitats serve as homes for our marine ecosystem and are critical to the survival of many species. Wildlife estrangement is also



Photo courtesy: theguardian.com

hugely impacted by marine debris were nets, ropes, fishing gears, balloons and straws can wrap around marine life. This entanglement can lead to injury, illness, suffocation, starvation and even death. Species such as sea turtles, seabirds, and marine mammals have been known to ingest marine debris. These items are most of the time mistaken as foods and accidentally ingested. Debris ingestion may lead to loss of nutrition, internal injury, intestinal blockage, starvation and even death.

Fishing or commercial vessels can suffer damages from marine debris as well. Sometimes these marine debris are very large and difficult to see on the ocean especially if its floating under the water surface. These debris can cause damage to a vessel either to its structure, tangled propeller, or clogged intake. The only way these marine debris can be controlled is if governments and relevant stakeholders join to create regulatory measures to prevent and reduce the number of debris that can potentially enter our river, seas and oceans.

## Importance of Country Compliance with RFMO Management Measures

By: Delice Pinkard-Senior Fisheries Officer

Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMO) are international organizations that are established to facilitate cooperation in the management of fishery resources within sub-regional areas. They play an important role in the overall global fisheries governance.

The primary function of an RFMO is to provide an effective forum for international cooperation to enable States to agree on important fisheries conservation and management measures. Member States of these RFMOs, such as Belize must ensure to adhere to and implement on their fishing vessels management measures adopted by these RFMOs to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fish stocks.

All RFMOs have adopted specific management measures and systems that member States are obligated to follow, such as proper recording and reporting of fisheries data, proper vessel monitoring and effective monitoring programs such as an Observer and Inspection program, *inter alia*. Although RFMOs ensure that member States assume responsibility for compliance through established and agreed protocols, it is the primary responsibility of the member State to ensure that their flagged vessels comply with RFMO measures.

A compliance committee has been established by most RFMOs to review, analyze and assess the annual compliance performance of each member State. Where there have been reports of non-compliance by a member State, established protocols are enforced by the RFMOs on the member State, such as the listing of the member's vessels as IUU, quota reductions, trade restrictive measures and for serious and continued non-compliance by a member State, voting rights restrictions.

To date, Belize has ensured to implement and notify its owners and operators of all conservation measures adopted by an RFMO which are applicable to their vessel operation. Compliance with the agreed management measures and enforcement through proper monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) are extremely crucial to implement, however Belize has been able to ensure compliance with up to ninety five percent of all conservation and management measures and have not been identified as a non-compliant member for the past five years.

## Capacity Building and Development for the BHSFU

As we navigate through Covid-19 infested waters we have not forgotten the importance of capacity building and development for our Unit and having a workforce with knowledge, skills and abilities to meet the innovative and emerging industry challenges.

Since the beginning of 2021 the BHSFU staff have attended virtual trainings, workshops and meetings in the following areas: Training on Proliferation Financing hosted by Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies. Training on Peaceful Resolution of Maritime Disputes hosted by the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) and training in Marine Mammal Protection Online Reporting Tools hosted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Staff have participated in workshops hosted by ICCAT and IATTC respectively, on Swordfish Biology, Management Strategy Evaluation, Electronic Monitoring Systems for Tuna Fisheries and Integrated Monitoring Measures.

As we continue into the second half of 2021 we shall ensure continued staff development for our Unit in order to strengthen our institutional capacity to fulfill the increasing obligations of Belize and to provide a more efficient high seas fisheries operation.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**The hungrier the fish the easier it is to catch.**



## ANABAC Atlantic Unassociated Purse Seine Yellowfin Certification

The BHSFU is proud to announce that the **Playa de Azkorri**, as a member of the Asociación Nacional de Armadores de Buques Atuneros Congeladores (ANABAC), has obtained Certification from the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) for its Atlantic associated purse seine yellowfin tuna fishery. The assessment team and Bureau Veritas Certification Holding SAS determined that the assessed fishery complies with MSC Fisheries Certification Requirements which stipulates that (1) fishing is at a level that ensures it can continue indefinitely and the fish population can remain productive and healthy, (2) fishing activities are managed carefully so that other species and habitats within the ecosystem remains healthy, and (3) the fishery is compliant with relevant laws and can adapt to changing environmental circumstances. This Certification guarantees that this fishery is well-managed and sustainable and meets the MSC Fisheries Standard which demonstrates that it follows the most up-to-date understanding of internationally accepted fisheries science and management.



**Belize Flagged Fishing Purse Seiner: PLAYA DE AZKORRI**



# FMC CORNER

## **COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY AND INSTITUTE (CZMAI) PARTNERS WITH THE BELIZE HIGH SEAS FISHING UNIT (BHSFU) TO PROMOTE DATA COLLECTION AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

The CZMAI and BHSFU signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on June 14, 2021 to formalize their existing institutional relationship. This MOU is in direct response to Belize's need to fulfill its international obligations under the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT). Belize ratified the Convention in 2005 and became a member of the ICCAT Commission—ICCAT's governing body. Member States co-operate in maintaining the populations of tuna species at sustainable levels, while permitting catches for food and other purposes. Under this agreement, ICCAT Member States, including Belize, must submit fisheries data on ICCAT managed species from fisheries occurring within and beyond Belize's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The CZMAI, through the Coastal Zone Management Act (1998) and the Statutory Instrument (115) is responsible for the management of sport fishing activities which occur in the flats and offshore areas in Belize, specifically through its licensing system. The Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU) established pursuant to the High Seas Fishing Act (2013) is the competent authority that is responsible for the regulation and control of high seas fisheries and conducts monitoring, control and surveillance of Belize's flag ships as well as collection and verification of high seas fisheries data.

To this end, CZMAI and BSHFU both play an integral role in the management and reporting of this fisheries data, and thus recognize the need to work together as well as to engage other key stakeholders to ensure adequate management and reporting mechanisms are in place.

One of the key outputs of this MOU will be the development and implementation of mechanisms, including a mobile application to support the collection and reporting of data for pelagic fish species in Belize's sport and recreational fisheries. Furthermore, other areas of collaboration will include capacity building for both institutions to ensure that data collection and subsequent reports are consistent with the standards outlined by ICCAT. This will enable continued sustainable use of the global fishery resource and ensure continued enjoyment of these resources for generations to come.

## **BHSFU welcomes new Monitoring Officer**



The Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU) takes this opportunity to introduce the newest member of the BHSFU Team, Mr. Ian Constantino, who joined the Team on June 1st, 2021. Ian will be working in our Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC) as our new Fisheries Monitoring Officer.

As the Monitoring Officer, Ian will have primary responsibility for the monitoring, control and surveillance of the high seas fishing fleet and will serve as the focal point for any issues connected to the vessel monitoring system, including the facilitation of the procurement, installation, registration and activation of new mobile transceiver units for newly registered vessels.

**Please join us in welcoming Ian to the team!**