

THE QUARTERLY CATCH

E-NEWSLETTER

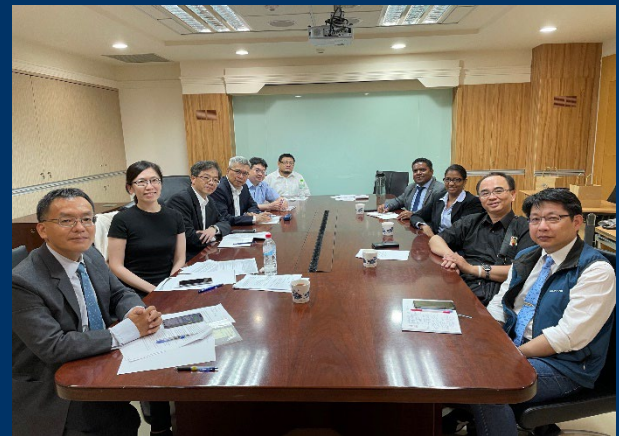
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STRENGTHENING TIES FOR FISHERIES COOPERATION

By: Robert Robinson-Deputy Director

The BHSFU is continuously seeking ways to improve its governance framework for fisheries management and enhancing its institutional capacity. This was the underlying objective of a one-week official visit to the Republic of China (Taiwan) in April of this year by senior official of the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit. (BHSFU).



Upon the invitation of the Taiwan Tuna Association, the Director Mrs. Valarie Lanza and Deputy Director Mr. Robert Robinson of the BHSFU visited Taiwan and engaged in several consultations with public and private fisheries agencies and academia. In an opening meeting, Director General of the Taiwanese Fisheries Agency, Mr. Chih-Sheng Chang expressed his gratitude for the support which Belize has provided to Taiwan in international fisheries management frameworks and his desire

to continue to strengthen bi-lateral relations between the two countries. Similarly, a meeting with the President Lin of the Taiwan Tuna Association and a few vessel owners, the tuna association expressed their interest in exploring ways in which they could engage in partnerships with Belize to further develop our domestic and distant water fisheries.

Director Lanza and Deputy Director Robinson also met with various representatives of the Taiwanese Fisheries Agency and the Fisheries Monitoring and Control Center to discuss continued cooperation and ways in which the agencies could strengthen bi-lateral relations between the agencies. Notably, the agencies agreed to establish a Memorandum of Understanding which would formalize their cooperation with a view to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. This would include the capacity development of BHSFU personnel through training opportunities.

Finally, the Belizean officials had the opportunity to deliver a series of lectures to the law of the sea students at the National Sun Yat-Sen University in Kaohsiung and the Soochow University in Taipei. This lecture series was entitled: "The Pillars of Distant Water Fisheries Management: A Belize Perspective" and it shared Belize's experience in managing distant water fisheries and various dynamics and best practices in the industry. The official visit would not be complete without visiting one of Belize's longest standing Designated Offices in Kaohsiung. The officials had the opportunity to visit Belize's Deputy Registrar of Ships, Mr. Wang Shau-Fun who have served in this capacity for more than 25 years.



The BHSFU is extremely grateful for this opportunity which was made possible through the invitation of President Lin of the Taiwan Association and facilitated by Professor Shih-Ming Kao of the National Sun Yat-Sen University. THANK YOU!

BHSFU Attends IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee Meeting

By: Delice Pinkard – Compliance and Enforcement Manager

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) is one of the oldest regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) in the world. Established in 1949, it is responsible for the conservation and management of tuna and other marine resources in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. The commission works towards promoting sustainable fishing practices and ensuring the long-term viability of tuna populations while also addressing issues such as bycatch reduction and scientific research.

Belize has been an active member of this Commission for many years and recently had the opportunity to attend the 1st Meeting of the Permanent Working Group on Ecosystems and By-catch, the 7th Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on FADs and the 14th Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC).

The Permanent Working Group Meeting on Ecosystems and By-Catch and the Ad Hoc Working Group on FADs discussed many topics but most importantly the need to strengthen measures for incidental by-catch of sharks and Mobulid rays the effects of FAD fishing in the region. Strategies include new fishing methods and effective monitoring systems. Further research is needed to understand the impact of FAD fishing on marine ecosystems and develop sustainable solutions.



The 14th Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee focused on the outcome of the research and analysis conducted by the Scientific staff regarding the status of the tropical tuna stocks and their associated species. The results of this research showed that tropical tuna stock was in a healthy condition, which means that there is no further need to revisit existing resolutions until after the official stock assessment, scheduled to be conducted in 2024. Additionally, it was indicated that there is a need to close data gaps because insufficient data is being provided by member countries. Belize is currently working with the scientific staff to ensure that all observer operational-level data from its fleet are provided so that better analysis can be done. Some other important recommendations that resulted from the SAC meeting included the need to further reduce FADs, ensure that shark fins are naturally attached to carcasses at the point of first landing, increase observer coverage for the long line fleet to 20% and reduce the number of sets on floating objects, among others.

The BHSFU's participation in these meetings was necessary to increase our understanding and appreciation of the importance of scientific research and its impact on the development and adoption of conservation and management measures. The recruitment of a new fisheries scientist and data officer will now allow Belize and by extension the BHSFU to fully participate in the scientific and decision-making process and its relation to the adoption of new measures. The BHSFU will also be participating in the upcoming IATTC Annual Meeting where the SAC's recommendations will be presented to the Commission for deliberation and consideration in the development and adoption of new proposals where necessary.

For more information visit [Meetings | IATTC](#)



Caribbean Regional Workshop on Maritime Sanctions Enforcement

By: Ernie Howe – Fisheries Officer

The Caribbean Regional Workshop on Maritime Sanctions Enforcement was hosted by the James Martin Center for Non-Proliferation Studies (CNS) with support from the US Department State's Office of Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) in Nassau, Bahamas on 26-27 April 2023. Several Caribbean countries including Belize, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Turks and Caicos participated in this regional workshop. The workshop's main goals were to provide the tools needed for flag State registries, corporate registries, national regulators, and other maritime authorities to implement maritime sanctions against countries that generate revenue from their nuclear and ballistic programs, such as the Republic of North Korea and Russian Federation.



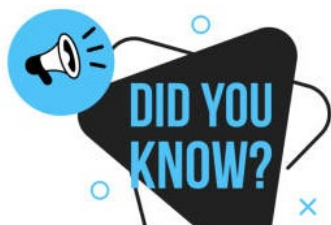
The workshop was very beneficial for Belize and had representation from various regulatory sectors such as the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize, the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit, the Belize Companies and Corporate Affairs Registry, the Financial Services Commission, and the Financial Intelligence Unit. Various topics were discussed, such as evasion tactics and specific strategies used by countries to evade sanctions, red flags exhibited by vessels



and companies that are involved in sanction evasion activities and how to distinguish them. Of particular interest was the discussion on fraudulent flag use where vessels continue to broadcast the flag after it has been deregistered or claiming valid registration where there is none. Important guidelines were provided on how to detect and combat these types of activities. Topics such as procedures on how to conduct registry audits and the importance of cooperation and information sharing among states were discussed.



The workshop provided many benefits for the organization's work. It was an interactive and constructive event that equipped the participants with a series of useful tools and risk analysis methods. These can now be adopted as part of our process of analyzing new vessels that seek to operate under the Belize flag.



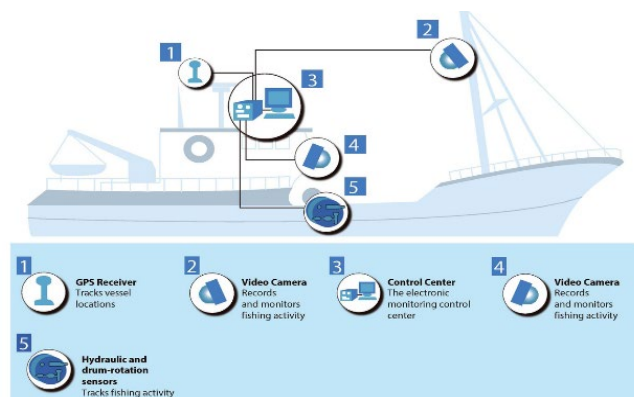
About 40% fishes caught worldwide are captured unintentionally and are either thrown back dying or left to die onboard a vessel

Technology Development Enhances Monitoring, Control & Surveillance

By: Ian Constantino – Monitoring Officer

The job of any Fisheries Monitoring Centre (FMC) is to provide around the clock oversight of its vessels that are engaged in high seas fisheries activities with the aim of reducing or deterring illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. These centres also work to ensure that fishing practices are sustainable and do not harm the marine ecosystem. By enforcing regulations and collecting data, fisheries monitoring centres play a crucial role in protecting the oceans and the livelihoods of those who depend on them.

For this to be successful, the monitoring officer must continuously review the GPS tracks of the entire fleet. This type of monitoring allows for quick response to any emergencies or incidents that may arise, allow for more informed decisions to be taken, and allows for quick response to changing situations as well as ensuring that the vessels are operating in accordance with domestic and international regulations.

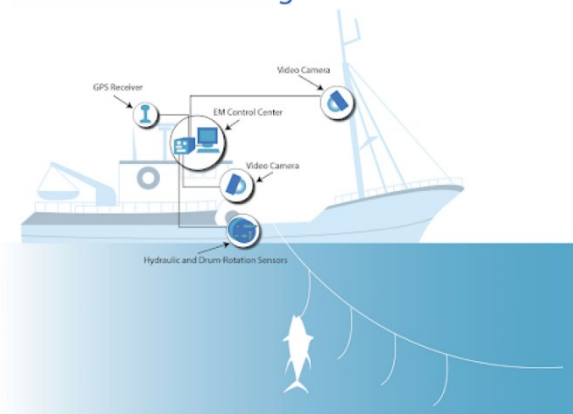


Although Belize's fishing fleet is considerably smaller than most registries, we take pride in making sure that the necessary monitoring and surveillance are conducted properly, diligently, and consistently.



It is critical for us to stay current with new technology given the pressing requirements for monitoring, control, and surveillance. As a result, it is the vision of the BHSFU to implement an electronic monitoring system on board our fishing vessels. This cutting-edge new technology uses a camera system installed onboard the vessel that will help the fisheries monitoring centre to observe, review and analyse real time footage of the activities that take place on board these vessels. This new system will also help to alleviate the pressures of human observers on board vessels and will also act as a data collection system.

Electronic Monitoring



Belize has taken the next step in advanced vessel monitoring as we embark on our goal of retrofitting our vessels with an electronic monitoring system. We are excited to be at the forefront of this technology and believe that it will not only benefit our fishing industry but also contribute to sustainable fishing practices. We realize the importance of responsible fishing and are committed to implementing measures that will ensure the long-term health of our marine resources.

DID YOU KNOW?

As many as 100 million sharks are killed each year for their meat and fins. Hunters catch the sharks, defrin them while alive and then throw them back into the ocean to drown or bleed to death.

THE SCIENCE CORNER

By Charles Coc – Fisheries Scientist and Data Officer

Plastic Pollution and Unsustainable Fishing in the High Seas

Biodiversity refers to the variety of living organisms present in a particular ecosystem. The high seas, which are the water bodies beyond national jurisdiction, houses a wealth of marine biodiversity. Protecting the high seas could help to maintain the productivity of fisheries and ensure the long-term sustainability of fish stocks. This, in turn, could support the livelihoods of millions of people who depend on fisheries for their food and income. However, like national waters, the health and stability of the high sea's ecosystem is threatened predominantly by unsustainable anthropogenic activities such as overfishing, pollution, and climate change.

To start, pollution in the high seas, particularly plastic pollution, is a growing concern for marine ecosystems. Scientific studies have revealed the negative impacts of macro- and micro-plastics on marine organisms, including seabirds, sea turtles, tuna, and sharks. A study published in the Marine Pollution Bulletin found that micro- and macro-plastics were detected in the stomachs of sharks and turtles with potential ecological and economic consequences¹. The ingestion of plastics could affect the nutritional quality of the fish and harm their reproductive success, ultimately impacting the fishing industry. It can also lead to physical harm, including internal injuries, and can also cause starvation due to blockages in the digestive tract². To combat this, countries such as Belize have banned the use of single-use plastics.

Regarding unsustainable fishing, the United Nations General Assembly agreed on the text of a new international agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction known as the High Seas Treaty.



The BBNJ negotiations have been concluded and there is some confidence that the High Seas Treaty will provide a framework for the establishment of high seas protected areas and other measures for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in the high seas. Albeit a great idea, there are several challenges and limitations associated with the establishment of high seas protected areas; one of the primary challenges being the lack of governance and regulation of the high seas. Unlike national waters, which faces their own challenges, the high seas have its own legal regime and are not subject to the same level of regulation and management, which can make it difficult to enforce protected areas established under the High Seas Treaty. Despite these challenges, proponents outline that these high seas protected areas could allow for the sustainable use of high seas resources, including fisheries and minerals, which are increasingly being targeted for exploitation.

To conclude, the presence of macro- and micro-plastics in the high seas are a serious issue with significant impacts on marine ecosystems and the organisms that inhabit them. It is essential to continue researching the extent and impacts of plastic pollution and taking action to reduce and prevent it. Regarding the conservation of marine biodiversity, the implementation of high seas protected areas could benefit a vast array of marine species, many of which are still poorly understood. Protecting these sensitive marine environments could assist in the recovery of ecological processes that support healthy marine ecosystem. Finally, the problem of plastic pollution and illegal fishing in the high seas is a growing concern for the future of our planet. It is imperative that we find ways to reduce our reliance on plastics, properly dispose of plastic waste and work towards reducing illegal fishing and promoting sustainable fishing practices.

BHSFU Continues to Strengthen its Institutional Capacity

In its effort to continue to strengthen its institutional capacity, the BHSFU has attended and participated in several meeting and workshops beneficial to the work of the Unit.

- Working Group Meeting on Electronic Monitoring System.
- Regional Workshop on the 2020 FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Transshipment
- Workshop on Multilateral Caribbean Workshop on Maritime Sanctions
- Working Group Meeting of Ecosystems Bycatch
- AD Hoc Working Group on FADs
- Workshop on Non-Detrimental Finding on Shark
- Management Strategy Evaluation Workshop
- ICCAT Meeting of the Online Reporting Technology Working Group
- ICCAT Panel 1 Meeting on Tropical Tunas
- IATTC Scientific Committee Meeting

These meetings and workshops have provided the BHSFU with valuable insights and knowledge, allowing them to stay updated on the latest advancements in their field. By actively engaging in these events, the BHSFU is ensuring that its institutional capacity remains robust and well-informed, ultimately enhancing its effectiveness in fulfilling its objectives. Since the beginning of 2023, BHSFU staff have actively participated in over 15 meetings and workshops, covering a wide range of topics relevant to their work. These interactions have not only expanded their professional network but also fostered collaboration with other organizations in the industry. As a result, the BHSFU has been able to leverage these connections to explore new opportunities and implement innovative approaches in their operations.

¹ Bernardini, I., Garibaldi, F., Canesi, L., Fossi, M. C., & Bains, M. (2018). First data on plastic ingestion by blue sharks (*Prionace glauca*) from the Ligurian Sea (North-Western Mediterranean Sea). *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 135(March), 303–310. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpolbul.2018.07.022>

² Wilcox, C., Van Sebille, E., & Hardesty, B. D. (2015). Threat of plastic pollution to seabirds is global, pervasive, and increasing. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 112(38), 11899–11904. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1502108112>

