

Fishing Vessel Circular Letter No. 046
19 June 2023
Series: RFMO-2023

To: All Ship Owners, Operators, Deputy Registrars, Resident Agents, Representatives, and other Stakeholders

Subject: **Prohibition on the Catching of South Atlantic Stock of Shortfin Mako Sharks Caught in Association with ICCAT Fisheries**

Reference: Issued in accordance with Part VIII, Section 50(1)(c) of the High Seas Fishing Act, 2013

Recommendation 22-11 by ICCAT on the Conservation of the South Atlantic Stock of Shortfin Mako Caught in Association with ICCAT Fisheries

Circular Superseded: Not Applicable

BACKGROUND:

Shortfin mako sharks in the South Atlantic are primarily fished in conjunction with ICCAT fisheries. According to estimates, the southern stock of shortfin mako sharks will be just as vulnerable to overfishing as the northern stock, and even with large reductions, recovery will take a very long time. According to the 2019 ICCAT SCRS report, the likelihood of the stock being overfished was 32.5%, and the likelihood of overfishing was 41.9%. The objective of ICCAT is to maintain the stock at levels which will permit maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and to take necessary actions to end the likely overfishing of the South Atlantic shortfin mako. This calls for the immediate adoption of management measures designed to result in the high probability of ending overfishing in as short a period as possible and to adopt a plan to rebuild the stock considering, inter alia, the biology of the stock and the scientific advice.

MANAGEMENT MEASURE ADOPTED BY ICCAT – Recommendation 22-11

In 2022 ICCAT adopted a recommendation for the Conservation of South Atlantic Stock of Shortfin Mako Caught in Association with ICCAT Fisheries which calls for CPCs to implement a maximum retention allowance in 2023 and 2024 of 60% of their average annual catches as reported between 2012 and 2021. For Belize this amounts to a total retention of 15t for 2023 and 2024.

Permission retention shall be subject to the following:

1. Reporting of all catches including any landings, dead discards and live releases shall be done monthly.
2. Reporting to the Commission the statistical methodology used to estimate dead discards and live releases. CPC that are unable to report on the methods used shall require their vessels to refrain

from retaining on board any quantity of south Atlantic shortfin mako sharks until such data have been reported.

3. Increased observer coverage, including EMS on all long line vessels that may have potential interaction with South Atlantic shortfin mako sharks.
4. Collection of biological samples and biological data of South Atlantic shortfin mako sharks.

MANAGEMENT MEASURES ADOPTED BY BELIZE

In consideration of above measures adopted by ICCAT this Administration has taken the decision to **prohibit its vessels from harvesting, retaining on board, transshipping, and landing, whole or in part South Atlantic Shortfin Mako Sharks caught in the high seas in association with ICCAT fisheries in 2023 and 2024.** Thereafter, and based on scientific advice, new measures shall be established.

Vessel operators are instructed to utilize the Best Practices for the Safe Handling and Release of Sharks as published in our Fishing Vessel Notice 003-2022 on 16-May-2022 (Attached). This is necessary to ensure the prompt release of unharmed mako sharks and to improve survivability of live South Atlantic Mako Shark when accidentally brought alongside the vessel.

APPLICABILITY

This circular applies to all Belize flagged fishing vessels fishing for or intending to fish South Atlantic Shortfin Mako Sharks in the ICCAT Convention Area.

MAINTENANCE

Stakeholders shall ensure that this Circular is acknowledged and observed.

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Failure to comply with any Circular shall result in disciplinary actions taken in accordance with Belize's Sanction Regulations S.I. 32 of 2014

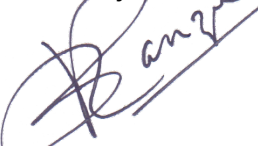
IMPLEMENTATION

This Circular shall be implemented with immediate effect.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information direct all inquiries about this Circular to the Director of High Seas Fisheries of the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit, Ministry of Finance, Government of Belize.

Issued by



VALARIE LANZA

Director of High Seas Fisheries

Director@bhsfu.gov.bz

Valerie.lanza@bhsfu.gov.bz

