

**Fishing Vessel Circular Letter No. 056**  
**07 December 2023**  
**Series: GEN-2023**

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

Subject: **VALIDATION OF CATCH CERTIFICATES IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL REGULATIONS (EC) NO.1005/2008 ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY SYSTEM TO PREVENT, DETER AND ELIMINATE IUU FISHING**

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

Circular Superseded: FVC-002/2014, Issued 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014

**BACKGROUND:**

Recognizing the ecological and cultural significance of cetaceans and their vulnerability to exploitation from fishing and fishing related activities and concerned about the potential impacts of purse seine fishing operations, it is necessary to adopt the precautionary approach to protect these species known as Cetaceans or marine mammals which includes, whales, dolphins, and porpoises, inter alia.

**MANAGEMENT MEASURES**

In applying the precautionary approach when managing tuna and tuna like species in accordance with Article V of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, which Belize has ratified; coastal and fishing states are specifically required to adopt measures to conserve listed species. As result, Belize flagged fishing vessels operating in the high seas shall prohibit retaining on board, transshipping, landing, storing, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of those species of the order Cetacea and commonly referred to as Cetaceans or marine mammals which includes whale, dolphins and porpoises, inter alia.

Purse seine vessels are prohibited from setting their net around a cetacean if the animal is sighted prior to the commencement of the set.

Where a cetacean is unintentionally encircled in a purse seine net, the master of the vessel shall:

- Take all reasonable steps to ensure the safe release of the cetacean, while taking into consideration the safety of the crew. These steps shall include following the proactive guidelines for the safe release and handling of cetaceans.
- Report the incident to this Authority with the following information:
  - Name of the species (if known);
  - The number of individuals,
  - A short description of the interaction, including details of how and why the interaction occurred, if possible,
  - The location of the encirclement,
  - The steps taken to ensure safe release,
  - An assessment of the life status of the animal on release, including whether the cetacean was released alive but subsequently died.

## **APPLICABILITY**

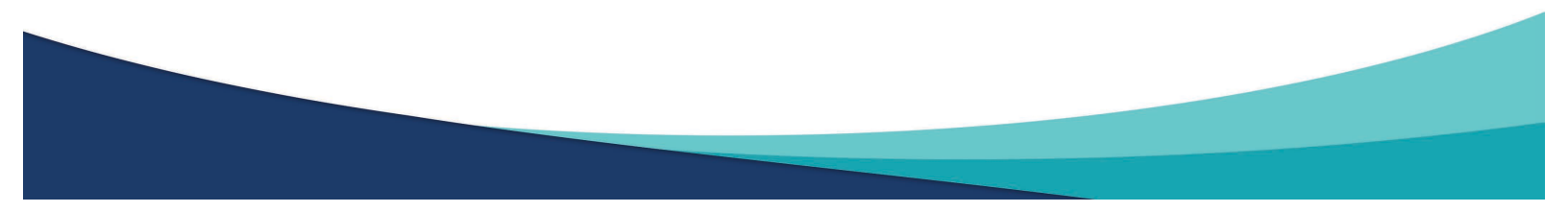
Circulars setting out mandatory requirements shall be construed to have the same effect and applicability of rules and policies under the provisions of the HSFA 2013. Each circular is applicable to all Belize flagged fishing vessels engaged in fishing and related activities. The owner, operator and master of every Belize flagged fishing vessel shall be familiar with all applicable Circulars applying to their vessel and it shall be no defense that any person in breach of any Circular was not aware of it or has not been advised of it.

## **MAINTENANCE**

Ship owners, and operators shall ensure that all Circulars are disseminated to their master and crew as well as any other person affected by or having an interest in the subject matter in a language understood by all. A Circular once issued shall be disseminated electronically to all stakeholders and a listing of ALL Circulars shall be published on the BHSFU website [www.bhsfu.gov.bz](http://www.bhsfu.gov.bz) for future reference.

## **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 take effect immediately.

## 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.

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Issued by

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