BELIZE HIGH SEAS FISHERIES UNIT
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Fishing Vessel Circular Letter No. 071
8 September 2026
Series: RFMO-2026

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

Subject: **CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES MANAGED BY ICCAT**

Reference: ICCAT Recommendation 10-08, 10-07, 09-07, 07-06, 25-07

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

Circular Superseded: FVC-08-11, FVC-10-04, FVC-10-01, FVC-13-02, FVC-13-07, FVC-09-11, FVC-10-11, FVC-041-2022

BACKGROUND:

Sharks are amazing ocean predators that play a critical role in maintaining the ocean's ecosystems. However, some species are especially vulnerable to overfishing because they cannot reproduce as quickly as other ocean animals. Most sharks are long lived, slow growing, take years to reach sexual maturity and give birth to few off-springs at a time. A large percentage of sharks are currently threatened with extinction due to an onslaught of threats such as shark finning, overfishing, habitat and prey loss and fisheries bycatch. For sharks to maintain their role and importance in the ocean's ecosystem, stringent management and conservation measures need to be developed and implemented for these creatures to remain in our oceans so that future generations may benefit from them.

MANAGEMENT MEASURES

1. Hammerhead Sharks (family *Sphyrnidae*)

Belize licensed fishing vessels operating on the high seas shall be prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of hammerhead sharks of the family *Sphyrnidae* (except for the *Sphyrna tiburo*) taken in the Convention area in association with ICCAT fisheries. Owners and operators shall ensure that catches of hammerhead sharks are promptly released unharmed, to the extent practicable when bought alongside their vessel.

2. Oceanic Whitetip Sharks (*Carcharhinus longimanus*)

Belize licensed fishing vessels operating on the high seas shall be prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of oceanic whitetip sharks taken in the Convention area in association with ICCAT fisheries. Owners and operators shall ensure that catches

of oceanic whitetip sharks are promptly released unharmed, to the extent practicable when bought alongside their vessel.

3. Thresher Sharks (*Alopias superciliosus*)

Belize licensed fishing vessels operating on the high seas shall be prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of thresher sharks taken in the Convention area in association with ICCAT fisheries. Owners and operators shall ensure that catches of thresher sharks are promptly released unharmed, to the extent practicable when bought alongside their vessel.

4. Porbeagle Sharks (*Lamma nasus*)

Belize licensed fishing vessels operating on the high seas shall be prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of porbeagle sharks taken in the Convention area in association with ICCAT fisheries. Owners and operators shall ensure that catches of porbeagle sharks are promptly released unharmed, to the extent practicable when bought alongside their vessel.

5. Basking Shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*)

Belize licensed fishing vessels operating on the high seas shall be prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of porbeagle sharks taken in the Convention area in association with ICCAT fisheries. Owners and operators shall ensure that catches of porbeagle sharks are promptly released unharmed, to the extent practicable when bought alongside their vessel.

6. Great White Shark (*Carcharodon carcharias)*

Belize licensed fishing vessels operating on the high seas shall be prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, landing, storing, selling, or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of porbeagle sharks taken in the Convention area in association with ICCAT fisheries. Owners and operators shall ensure that catches of porbeagle sharks are promptly released unharmed, to the extent practicable when bought alongside their vessel.

APPLICABILITY

This Circular applies to Belize licensed fishing vessels operating in the high seas and which catch sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT.

MAINTENANCE

Stakeholders shall ensure that this Circular is acknowledged and observed.

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORECEMENT

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.

Issued by



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