



# BELIZE HIGH SEAS FISHING VESSEL CIRCULAR



FVC-13/07

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Issued: 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013

Rev: 1

**TO: ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, CHARTERERS, MASTER AND CREW, DEPUTY REGISTRARS AND RESIDENT AGENTS**

**SUBJECT: CONSERVATION OF THRESHER SHARKS CAUGHT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES IN THE IOTC AREA OF COMPETENCE**

**Reference: Issued in accordance with Part II 3 (1)(f) and Part VII 19(1)(2) of the Belize High Seas Fishing Act, 2003**

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## **BACKGROUND:**

Thresher sharks as well as other shark species are typically caught as by-catch in the IOTC area of competence. Scientific studies point out that the bigeye thresher sharks (*Alopias superciliosus*) is particularly endangered and vulnerable. Additionally, it is very difficult to differentiate between various species of thresher sharks without taking them on board and that such action might jeopardize the survival of captured individuals. It was therefore decided that measures need to be implemented to ensure the sustainability of this species of shark.

## **APPLICABILITY**

This Circular is applicable to all Belize registered fishing vessels operating in the IOTC area of competence and neighbouring seas.

## **COMPLIANCE MEASURE**

1. All vessels are prohibited from retaining on board, transshipping, landing, storing, selling or offering for sale any part or whole carcass of thresher sharks of all the species of the family Alopiidae.
2. Vessel shall promptly release unharmed, to the extent practicable, thresher sharks when brought alongside for taking on board the vessel.
3. A record of all incidental catches as well as lives releases shall be recorded by the master and reported to this Administration.
4. Recreational and sports fishing shall release alive all caught animals of thresher sharks of all the species of the family Alopiidae. In no circumstances specimen shall be retained on board, transshipped, landed, stored, sold or offered for sale. Vessels which engage in sports or

recreational fishing shall ensure that they are equipped with instruments suitable to release alive any catches of thresher sharks.

#### **ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE**

This Circular is considered a legally binding document in accordance with Part XIII 108(1)(2) of the Merchant Ships Registration Act 2010. Failure to comply with this circular will result in disciplinary actions taken against the vessel owners, operators and master or any other party affiliated with the operation of the vessel.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

This Fishing Vessel Circular is to be implemented with immediate effect and shall remain in force until further notification by the Belize Administration.

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***Any queries related to this Circular should be directed to:***

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