



**BELIZE FISHERIES DEPARTMENT**  
**Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation**



CITES and Fisheries: Partnerships for legal, sustainable and traceable trade in commercially exploited aquatic species

**CITES COP 19**

Mauro Gongora, Fisheries Officer.

Panama City, Panama. 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022



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- Legal Instruments
- Partnerships
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- Main challenges



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# CITES Management Authority - Belize



.Belize Forest Department oversees the sustainable management of Belize's forest resources.



Belize Fisheries Department has the direct mandate for the management of Belize's aquatic and fisheries resources.



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# Fisheries Sector



Territorial waters: **18954 km<sup>2</sup>**

Exclusive Economic Zone: **14755 km<sup>2</sup>**

**9 Fishing Zones** established in territorial waters

**9 Marine Reserves**

Small-scale/artisanal fisheries

Employ approx **3,171 licensed fishers**

**872 licensed artisanal vessels**

**15,000 Belizeans** direct beneficiaries





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## Fisheries sector overview



- Fishermen are highly organized in fishing cooperatives.
- Fishing is done exclusively by free diving (use of SCUBA prohibited) and use of traps and handlines. Value of sector: US\$25 million
- Focused primarily on reef species: lobster, conch, finfish.
- Main export commodities include Caribbean Spiny Lobster and Queen Conch
  - Lobster export values representing 74.8%
  - Conch export values representing 24%
  - Other 1.2% include: King Crab, whole fish, aquarium fish, sharks



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## Legal Instruments



- Fisheries Act Chapter 210 (2000) amended in 2020, now **Fisheries Resources Act No. 7 of 2020** (effective since February 14, 2020).
- Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Bill 2022



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### **CITES 2022 Bill is before a Senate committee for review (will be introduced in the upcoming Senate sitting)**

**BELIZE:**

#### **TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES (CITES) BILL, 2022**

##### ARRANGEMENT OF CLAUSES

###### PART I

###### *Preliminary*

1. Short title.
2. Interpretation.

###### PART II

###### *Administration*

###### SUB-PART I

###### *Management Authority*

3. Designation of Management Authority.
4. Functions of Management Authority.

###### PART II

###### *Administration*

###### SUB-PART I

###### *Management Authority*

3. Designation of Management Authority.
4. Functions of Management Authority.

###### SUB-PART II

###### *Scientific Authority*

5. Establishment and constitution of Scientific Authority.
6. Appointment of Chairperson.
7. Publication of membership.
8. Tenure of office.
9. Resignation.
10. Revocation of appointment.



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### Partnerships

- Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association
- Southern Environmental Association
- Toledo Institute for Development and Environment
- Hol Chan Marine Reserve Board of Trustees
- Belize Forest Department
- Belize Agricultural Health Authority
- Belize Customs and Excise Department
- Belize Bureau of Standards – Supplies and Control Unit
- Belize Police Department
- Belize Coast Guard
- Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit

### Fisheries Council

- July 2021
- 10-member council
- Improving coordination for the sustainable growth of the fisheries sector of the nation's blue economy and overall economic development.

### Working Groups

- Belize National Spawning Aggregation Working Group
- Belize Sea Turtle Conservation Network
- Belize Coral Reef Monitoring Network
- National Manatee Working Group
- National Shark Working Group





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## **Compliance with CITES requirements**

- Legal Acquisition Findings
- Non-Detriment Findings
- Introduction from the sea
- Queen conch stock assessment, catch landings data collection and monitoring for adherence to catch quota and minimum weight



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## **Non-Detriment Findings – Queen conch (*Strombus gigas*)**

1. Currently an interim Scientific Authority is in place. A formal appointment of members will be made in accordance and once CITES Act is enacted
2. Full QC stock assessments done every 2 yrs since 2001. The objectives is to gather field data to determine population structure, mean shell length, density, abundance and biomass availability estimates, catch quotas established.
3. Queen conch exports require inspection of each shipment for compliance with fisheries regulations before a CITES certificate is issued by MA.
4. eNDF done for 2 hammerheads and silky shark in 2022.
5. Exports of shark meat requires inspection by Fisheries Department before a CITES certificate issued by MA.



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## **Legal Acquisition Findings**

- 95% of fisherfolks and fishing vessels registered and licensed annually. Compliance is high.
- Fisherfolks licensed to fish in 2 Fishing Areas only. Compliance is high.
- Monitoring of 6 shark landing sites require additional resources to improve management.
- Enforcement of new New Regulations SI No. 128 of 2021 (Sharks).



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## Introduction from the sea

- Belize-flagged vessels operating in the high seas are required to comply with national laws enacted under the High Seas Fishing Act 2013 and Statutory Instruments and National Plans of Action for Sharks
- One CITES certificate (shark) issued by MA to a registered HSF vessel (HSFU).





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## Challenges related to CITES and Fisheries

01

Enactment of  
legislation (Trade in  
Endangered Species  
(CITES) Bill 2022

02

Limited human  
resources available to  
carry out the  
necessary fisheries  
law enforcement  
actions

03

Limited resources for  
mobilization

04

Need of an e-platform  
(central hub for  
sharing and  
monitoring of CITES  
certificates issued.



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**Thank you!**