

MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE REGULATION OF FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES (FAD)

B E L I Z E



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope

This Plan sets out the methods and measures that the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit (BHSFU) will use to standardize the use of Fish Aggregating Devices (FAD) for various purposes including limiting fishing mortality on vulnerable tropical tuna species such as juvenile bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack tuna.

Fundamentals of this Plan apply to Belize flagged purse seine vessels operating on the High Seas. Unless otherwise indicated, references to fishing or fishing vessels apply to purse seine fishing vessels, group purse seine fishing vessels and their support vessels.

1.2 Legal Status

In the first order, this FAD Management Plan represents the strategy of the BHSFU and does not have legal effect in its own right. It is the aim of the BHSFU to introduce specific features of the Plan through various means in the short term which may contain permit conditions and legally binding Fishing Vessel Circulars.

In the long term, this Plan will be reviewed according to further developments, such as to ICCAT Recommendation 15-01. Specific Regulations will be introduced to give legal effect to the Plan.

1.3 Objective

The objective of this FAD management plan are but not limited to:

- a. Reinforce the gathering of scientific data;
- b. Decrease the catch of bycatch of small tunas on FADs;
- c. Effectively manage the deployment and retrieval of FADs;
- d. Limit the number of FADs deployed

2. DESCRIPTION

2.1 Definition and Types of FADs

For the purpose of this Plan, a FAD is *“any permanent, semi-permanent or temporary structure or device made from any material and used to lure fish in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the fishing operation”*

This plan differentiates between different types of FADs for the intention of regulating their use. The following types of FAD are covered in this Plan:

Anchored FAD – an object or group of objects, of any size, that has or has not been deployed, including but not limited to vessels, buoys, floats, netting, webbing, plastics, bamboo, and logs floating on or near the surface of the water that fish may associate with and that has a mooring line attached to an anchor or other object that ensures the FAD remains in a fixed location.

Drifting FAD – any object or group of objects, of any size, that has been deployed, including but not limited to vessels, buoys, floats, netting, webbing, plastic, bamboo and logs floating on or near the surface of the water that fish may associate with.

Other FAD – Any other object or group of objects that fits the general description of a FAD but is not an anchored FAD or a deployed drifting FAD.

2.2 FAD Limits

Purse seine vessels that are licensed in accordance with Belize's High Seas Fishing Act, 2013 may deploy and use anchored FADs. The total number of anchored FADs that may be deployed shall not exceed 500 at any one time. The total number may be reviewed on a case by case basis and depending on the vessel size.

The deployment of FADs in the EEZ of other States are outside the restrictions imposed by this management plan and shall be in accordance with the laws of that State.

2.3 Consideration of interaction with other gear types

In reference to possible conflict between purse seine fishing and the long line fleet which may result from the wide range use of FADs in the purse seine fishery, the situation will be monitored. Specifically, data will be gathered on the operation of the tuna long line fleet as it continues to grow and on the characteristics of purse seine catches as determined through our observer program. Any unfavorable impacts resulting from FAD fishing or FADs having obstructed the operation of the long line fleet will result in this policy being reviewed should such impacts be clearly established.

2.4 By-Catch Policy

Vessel owners/operators in the purse seine FAD fishery shall be required to submit information on the by-catch taken during fishing operations by species, estimates of volume or estimate of number of fish in catches. This shall be reported through the catch log sheets.

If the by-catch taken is utilized in any way, it is required that the operator submit a report on the disposition of the by-catch on a species-by-species basis.

The Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit through its observer program shall monitor the by-catch in both the anchored and drifting FAD tuna purse seine fishery with a goal of establishing the average weight of species make-up of by-catch.

2.5 FAD Ownership

This Plan does not generate any property rights over FADs or fish that may aggregate to them. No exceptionality of access is considered when a particular vessel deploys a FAD in accordance with this Plan.

3. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT

3.1 Institutional responsibilities for the FAD Management Plan

The Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit, under the Ministry of Finance is the competent authority responsible for the development and implementation of this FAD Management Plan.

3.2 Application process for FAD deployment approval

Vessel owners/operators shall provide prior notice to the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit of their intention to deploy FADs. The information to be provided shall include:

- i. Location in latitude and longitude,
- ii. Date of deployment,
- iii. New or replacement FAD,
- iv. FAD number assigned.

All FAD deployment, for new or replaced FADs shall be witnessed and documented by an observer approved by the BHSFU.

3.3 FAD replacement Policy

The owners/operators shall notify the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit before any lost FADs are replaced and a report from an observer shall be required as testimony of the replacement of the FAD. Replacement of FADs shall be deployed with a new identification number in accordance with this Plan.

3.4 Additional reporting obligations

Location of FADs and reporting

Owners/operators of tuna purse seine FAD fishery should submit quarterly list of FADs deployed. The list should provide, at a minimum, position of each FAD in terms of latitude and longitude, date of deployment and identification of lost FADs. This list should be submitted no later than 30 days after the preceding quarter has ended.

Monitoring of the FAD Fishery

Catch data shall be collected from all purse seine vessels based on the use of FADs in order to monitor the species make-up of tunas and other information of the FAD associated catches.

Reporting requirements for FAD fishing

Owners and operators that utilized FADs in their fishery shall comply with the reporting requirement as set out in this Plan and other legally binding circulars and submit information on their catches.

Owners/operators involved in FAD fishery shall be required to carry on board fisheries observers to monitor their fishing activities, FAD deployment operations, supply and mothership activities up to 100%.

FAD License

FADs cannot be deployed and utilized without a FADs license issued by the Director of the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit.

- a. Any vessel owner/operator who intends to deploy FADs on the high seas shall be required to have a FAD license.
- b. A FAD license shall be issued simultaneously with the fishing license issued to the vessel and shall be valid for similar period.
- c. Each purse seine vessel shall be required to keep its FAD license on board with fishing on FAD.
- d. FADs can only be deployed consistent with their FAD license

3.5 Conflict Resolution in relation to FADs

Any conflict arising between the operators in the purse seine FAD fishery shall be referred to the Director of the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit and where a resolution cannot be made then the matter shall be taken to the Registrar of Ships in accordance with Belize's High Seas Fishing Act, 2013 and subsidiary regulations, and whose decision shall be final.

3.6 Details of any closed areas or periods

This section of the Plan describes the provisions that will be applied to Belize flagged purse seine fishing vessels operating in the high seas in accordance with ICCAT's Guidelines for the Preparation of FAD Management Plan as contained in Recommendation 15-01

The requirements below will be endorsed via conditions of fishing licenses issued to relevant vessels until such time as this Plan is reflected in Belize's Regulations.

All Belize flagged purse seine fishing vessels operating in the high seas and any other jurisdictions utilizing FAD in the ICCAT Convention area will be required to observe the Area/Time closure in relation with the protection of juveniles as contained in Recommendation 15-01 from January 1st to February 28th of each year as specified below:

- Southern limit: parallel 4° / South latitude
- Northern limit: parallel 5° / North latitude
- Western limit: meridian 20° / West longitude
- Eastern limit: the African coast

The prohibition outlined above includes but is not limited to:

- Launching any floating objects, with or without boat;
- Fishing around, under, or in association with artificial objects, including vessels;
- Fishing around, under, or in association with natural objects;
- Towing floating objects from inside to outside the closure area.

Vessels fishing on unassociated 'free schools' shall be required to have an authorized observer on board for the duration of their fishing activities within the area/time closure.

3.7 Requirements for Deploying FADs

The deployment of any FADs during the FAD closure periods specified above is strictly prohibited. At any other times, deployment must be directed in accordance with the requirements below.

Consistent with para.37 of ICCAT Recommendation 15-01, all Belize flagged purse seine fishing vessels operating on the high seas during the area/time closure specified above will be subject to 100% observer coverage under the ICCAT Scientific Observer Program. Observers will monitor all FAD deployments of all surface fishing vessels 20 meters LOA or greater fishing tropical tunas in the area/time closure referred to above.

The vessel master must provide the following information in writing to the Director of High Seas Fisheries of the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit, when deploying a drifting FAD:

- i. The date of deployment;
- ii. The location (latitude and longitude) recorded in degrees and minutes;
- iii. FAD type (anchored FAD, drifting artificial FAD, etc)
- iv. The FAD number that has been assigned; and
- v. A declaration that the FAD meeting the marking and design requirements contained in sections 4.1.4 and 4.1.5 respectively.

No FAD shall be deployed unless prior authorization from the BHSFU is granted and which shall be reliant on:

- i. Provision of all the information above; and
- ii. The number of FADs already deployed by the vessel

The BHSFU shall not authorize the deployment of a FAD if records show that the FAD limit would be surpassed by the relevant vessel.

4. FAD CONSTRUCTION, SPECIFICATION AND REQUIREMENTS

4.1 FAD Marking

Deployed drifting FADs must be clearly marked as follows:

- a. With the raft section clearly painted with reflecting paint so that it can be seen from a distance of 1 kilometer;
- b. The raft section should support a radar reflector that must be suspended at least 2 meters above the waterline of the raft;
- c. With the name of the vessel that has deployed it;
- d. The FAD number.
- e. Electronic devices such as transponders and radio beacons which mechanically and constantly indicate their location by way of signals may be used in addition to other devices, but should not

be activated at radio signals that could clash with other devices used for navigation and search and rescue purposes.

The name of the vessel and FAD number shall be contained on a removable plate such that in the event that FADs are changed, the plate can be connected to the new FAD ensuring that the same FAD number corresponds to the same deployment location in terms of latitude and longitude.

The marking of the FAD above must be in lettering at least 30cm high and of a color that contrasts with the color of the plate. The plate must be connected to a point on the FAD where it is clearly noticeable.

The FAD number is to be allocated by the vessel master and shall be the first three letters of the vessel name followed by a two digit number (which shall be sequential according to the number of FADs deployed in the high seas), followed by the letters “HS” to indicate deployment in the high seas

For example:

Vessel Name: RANDOM

FAD ID: RAN01HS

4.2 FAD Design and Construction

In order to minimize the ecological impact of FADs, in particular the entanglement of sharks, turtles and other non-target species, and the release of synthetic persistent marine debris, all deployed man-made FADs must meet the following minimum criteria:

- i. The surface structure of the FAD should not be covered or only covered with material implying minimum risk of entanglement by-catch species and should be constructed such that they can be easily located at their place of deployment.
- ii. The sub-surface components should be exclusively composed of non-entangling material (e.g. ropes or canvas).
- iii. The use of biodegradable materials should be prioritized in the designing of FADs.
- iv. The design should include an appropriate number of counter weights along the synthetic rope to ensure that it sinks to the bottom in the event that the floater becomes detached and drifts away.
- v. The design and maintenance of FADs shall be the responsibility of the owner/operator deploying the FADs

4.3 Replacing Lost FADs

The vessel master shall notify the BHSFU that a FAD has been permanently lost by providing the following information:

- i. The date of last sighting of the FAD;

- ii. The location (latitude and longitude) recorded in degrees and minutes of last sighting;
- iii. The FAD number; and
- iv. FAD Construction material.

The BHSFU will review this information and may grant approval to deploy a replacement FAD depending on the situations.

4.4 Requirement for Retrieving FADs

Consistent with ICCAT Recommendation 15-01, all Belize flagged purse seine fishing vessels operating on the high seas during the area/time closure will be subject to 100% observer coverage under their Scientific Observer Program. Observers will monitor all FAD retrievals.

The vessel master must supply the following data in writing to the BHSFU:

- i. The date of retrieval;
- ii. The location (latitude and longitude) recorded in degrees and minutes of retrieval; and
- iii. The FAD number.

5. APPLICABLE PERIOD FOR FAD MANAGEMENT PLAN

This plan is applicable for a period of 2 year from date of issuance.

6. MONITOR AND REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF FAD MANAGEMENT PLAN

This FAD Management Plan shall be reviewed every two year and may be amended at any time as deemed necessary. The next review is scheduled for January 2019.