



Turneffe Atoll
Sustainability Association

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**SUSTAINABLE
FISHING FOR
OUR FUTURE**
MANAGED ACCESS



Turneffe Atoll Marine Reserve Regulations

Securing Ecosystems;
Building Economic Resilience!



Turneffe Atoll
Sustainability Association

“Report any illegal fishing activity happening at the Turneffe Atoll Marine Reserve to TASA (223-1927) or the Belize Fisheries Department (Tel: 224-4554).”

- *Langostin the Lobster*



Belize Fisheries Regulations

Mission

“To provide the country and people of Belize with the best possible management, of its aquatic and fisheries resources, with a view to optimize the present and future benefits through efficient and sustainable management”.

The Belize Fisheries Department under the current Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation and guidance from the Fisheries Administrator is responsible for the overall management of Belize’s fisheries resources.

The department is responsible for the conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources, registration and licenses, fisheries research, education, liaise with fishing cooperatives, management of marine reserves, fisheries law enforcement, export and research permits. The Belize Fisheries Department along with co-managers of marine protected areas have been able to develop effective fisheries regulations and enforce them through Belize’s coastal waters to procure the sustainable extraction and protection of marine species.

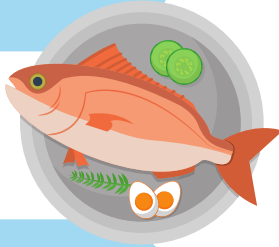
Fisheries regulations have proven a necessary fisheries management tool to enhance marine protected areas management in Belize. Enforcement of fisheries laws and regulation are in accordance with the new Fisheries Resources Act Chapter 210 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020.



Benefits of MPAs

Empowering fishing communities to manage natural resources

Supporting national food security



Sustainable fishing/improved fisheries stocks

Protection of key habitats

Supports fishing & tourism industries (jobs & income)



Empowerment of local stakeholder groups of the MPA

Research & education

National & international recognition

Turneffe Atoll Marine Reserve (TAMR)

The Turneffe Atoll Marine Reserve (TAMR) was officially established on November 22, 2012, after 20 years of arduous lobbying from all stakeholder groups. TAMR is Belize's largest and most biologically diverse marine reserve in the Western Hemisphere. Located approximately 20 miles east from Belize's coast and covering an area of 30 miles in length by 10 miles in width, the marine reserve features an important and interconnected network of marine ecosystems, such as: reefs, back reef flats, seagrass beds, creeks, lagoons, littoral forests and mangroves. TAMR is comanaged by TASA and the Belize Fisheries Department. TAMR stakeholders include commercial fishermen, tourism operators, educational institutions, private landowners, and the Government of Belize (as major landowner, regulator, and administrator of the marine reserve)

The Importance of TAMR

The reserve features a diverse biological ecosystem with significant resources such as nursery grounds for the Queen conch and Caribbean spiny lobster; abundant reef fish; a healthy population of Antillean manatees; nesting sites for the American crocodile and dolphin; suitable nesting grounds for green, loggerhead, and hawksbill turtles, and five known fish spawning aggregation sites.

TAMR is also of great socioeconomic importance to all stakeholders and to the country of Belize. For decades the atoll has been crucial to the livelihoods of fishermen by providing a form of income for their families. In addition, the atoll has contributed to Belize's tourism and fishing industries. The marvelous reef structure of the atoll has served as a protective barrier from storms affecting the coast of Belize.



Sea Cucumbers



Sea cucumber fishing is only allowed with a special permit issued by the Fisheries Administrator.



Closed Season: July 1st to December 31st of every year



Catch size is 10 inches long in relaxed state or 200 grams (or 7 ounces) wet weight - which includes all its intestines or guts

Corals



- It is illegal for any person to take, sell or have in his possession any type of coral.
- Only Black Coral (order *Antipatharia*) may only be bought, sold or exported with a special license from the Fisheries Administrator.

Whelks-West Indian Top Shell (*Cittarium pica*)

Fishing of whelks is allowed only with a special permit issued by the Fisheries Administrator.



Closed Season: January 1st to September 30th of every year.



Legal size is 2.5 inches (62 mm) in diameter and greater



Bonefish, Tarpon, Permit

(sports fishing)



It is illegal to have in your possession any bonefish (*Albula vulpes*), tarpon (*Megalops atlanticus*), and permit fish (*Trachinotus falcatus*) (2009 Fisheries Regulations).

These 3 species are protected and are for catch & release purposes only (sport fishing), (2009 Coastal Zone Management Authority Regulations).

For more information on sport fishing licenses and regulations, you can visit the Coastal Zone Management Authority & Institute Office or at <http://www.coastalzonebelize.org>.

Prohibited Activities In Turneffe

NO fishing using SCUBA, poisons, or explosives.



No person shall engage in water-skiing or jet-skiing except in areas that may be designated by the Fisheries Administrator.



TAMR Management Zones

Zoning is an essential function of marine reserves and is critical for the long-term management of commercial fisheries. Proper zoning protects the spawning, nursery areas and also offers sanctuaries to help in maintaining fish stocks.

TAMR encompasses a total area of 131,690 hectares (325,412 acres/ 1,317 sq. km). Nine zones have been designated to accomplish the conservation and management needs of the reserve. These zones fall under 4 different management types- General Use Zone, Preservation Zone, Conservation Zones and Special Management Areas.

General Use Zone

This area allows for commercial fishing of conch, lobster, and fin fish within the general rules of the reserve. Fishermen using the TAMR are required to have their Managed Access license with designation for Turneffe (Area 6). No gill nets, long lines, or beach traps are allowed in the reserve. Recreational activities such as snorkeling, diving, and sport fishing is allowed.

Preservation Zone

This area was established with the purpose of keeping an area in its entire natural state for the replenishment of commercial and other species. Entry to the zone for fishing, snorkeling, and diving is prohibited; except in emergencies or with written permission from the Fisheries Administrator.

- *Zone VII: Preservation Zone*

Conservation Zones

- TAMR includes (5) Conservation Zones:
 - *Zone I: Mauger Caye Conservation Zone*
 - *Zone II A: Dog Flea & Blackbird Caye Conservation Zone*
 - *Zone IV: Calabash Reef Conservation Zone*
 - *Zone V: Long Bogue Conservation Zone*
 - *Zone VI: Caye Bokel Conservation Zone*

These are no-take zones. Only catch and release recreational activities are allowed, with a valid sport fishing license. These areas are necessary for the undisturbed replenishment of commercial and other reef species.

The Special Management Zones

TAMR includes two (2) Special Management Zones

Zone IIB: Cockroach-Grassy Caye Special Management Area: This area was established to protect the critical conch nursery grounds. No conch fishing is allowed in this zone. Only lobster fishing is allowed in the zone.

Zone III: Vincent's Lagoon Special Management Area: Fishing is allowed ONLY to traditional users. The traditional users are defined by the Fisheries Administrator.

In addition, Managed Access, a rights-based fisheries management tool, was implemented nationally in June 2016. This tool will complement MPAs management in Belize, to achieve sustainable fisheries in the country.



Management Zones

- Zone I- Maugre Caye Conservation Zone
- Zone IIA- Dog Flea and Black Bird Caye Conservation Zone
- Zone IIB- Cockroach-Grassy Caye Special Management Zone
- Zone III- Vincent's Lagoon Special Management Area
- Zone IV- Calabash Reef Conservation Zone
- Zone V- Long Bogue Conservation Zone
- Zone VI- Caye Bokel Conservation Zone
- Zone VII- Preservation Zone
- Zone VIII- General Use Zone
- Spawning Aggregation Site

Approximate Scale



Grazers



No person shall take in the waters of Belize, buy, sell or have in his possession any grazer: *Scaridae* Family, including genus *Scarus* and *Sparisoma* and any fish of the *Acanthuridae* Family, commonly known as Parrot fish and Tangs.

Angelfishes & Triggerfishes



No person shall take in the waters of Belize, buy, sell or have in his possession any fish from the family: Pomacanthidae (commonly known as Angelfish) and Balistidae (commonly know as Triggerfishes)

Sharks

- No whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) or nurse shark (*Ginglymostoma cirratum*) shall be caught or killed in Belizean waters. Both shark species are protected.
- Fishing of other species of sharks can only be done with a special license issued by the Fisheries Administrator.
- All sharks should be landed with fins attached.



- Closed season for other species is from May 1st to October 31st of every year

- All sharks should be landed with fins attached.
- No person shall engage in shark finning.
- No person shall, within a radius of 2 miles of the Atolls (Turneffe, Glover's Reef and Lighthouse Reef):
 - Fish for shark (all species *Selachimorpha*);
 - Fish using hooks greater than 12/0; or
 - Fish using any unanchored or drifting longline.
- A person who lands sharks while fishing for any other fish, allowed to be landed within a radius of 2 miles of these atolls, shall immediately release in the same state it was landed.

Nassau Grouper

Epinephelus striatus



All groupers are to be landed as whole fish.



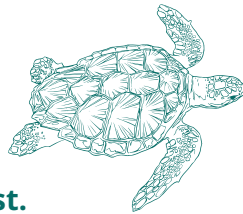
Closed Season: December 1st to March 31st of every year.



Minimum catch size is 20 inches.
Maximum catch size is 30 inches.

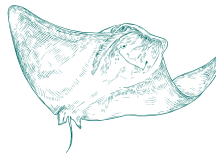


Marine Turtles



- No person should interfere with any turtle nest.
- No person shall take any species of marine turtle.
- No person shall buy, sell, or have in his possession any article made of turtle shells.

Rays



- No person shall take in the waters of Belize, buy, sell or have in his possession any species of rays of the superorder Batoidea.

General Rules and Regulations applicable throughout the Marine Reserve

- All persons on board a commercial fishing vessel are required to have a valid managed access license (also known as commercial license) for their specific areas of fishing.
- Only persons of 18 years of age and above are eligible to apply for managed access license.
- Any vessel employed in commercial fishing should be licensed at the Belize Fisheries Department and should display the managed access color code for their respective fishing areas.
- No person shall export, attempt to export or purchase with a view to export any fish product without a valid Fish Exporter's License.
- No person shall be permitted to use long lines, fish traps, seine nets or gill nets in the reserve unless authorized by the Fisheries Administrator or for scientific purposes.
- No person shall cast or drag any anchor in any manner which may damage coral or any other sensitive habitat.
- Any activity with potentially negative environmental impacts on species, habitats or ecosystems shall require written approval from the Fisheries Administrator.

Caribbean Spiny Lobster

Panulirus argus



- No person shall have in his possession any fillet, or diced lobster tail, soft shell, berried lobster with tar spot or that has had the spawn removed.



Closed Season: March 1st to June 30th of every year.



Carapace length should be 3.25 inches or greater



Tail weight should be 4.5 ounces and greater.

Lobster Traps

- No person shall set any lobster traps in the fisheries waters of Belize during the lobster closed season.
- Persons licensed to fish for lobster may set a lobster trap in the fisheries waters of Belize from 21st June if the trap is closed and unable to catch lobsters.
- No person shall within intent to take fish, use any trap or other devices constructed of net or wire in any area within a distance of three hundred (300) yards of the Barrier Reef or any path reef.



Queen Conch



Strombus gigas

No fisherman should have in his possession diced conchs.



Closed Season: July 1st to 30th September of every year.



Shell length should be greater than 7 inches



- Unprocessed conch should be greater than 7.5 ounces.
- Market clean weight should be greater than 3 ounces.
- Fillet weight should be greater than 2.75 ounces.



Unprocessed - 7.5oz



Market Clean - 3oz



Fillet - 2.75oz

Fish Fillet



All fish landed as fish fillet shall have a skin patch of at least 2 inches by 1 inch.

