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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Belize Achieves Major Milestone: U.S. NOAA Grants Comparability Finding for All Belizean Fisheries**

*Belmopan, September 3, 2025.*

The Ministry of Blue Economy and Marine Conservation (MBEMC) is pleased to announce that the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) has issued a comparability finding for all of Belize's fisheries listed on the List of Foreign Fisheries.

This historic achievement means that all Belizean fisheries are recognized as comparable to U.S. standards under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) Import Provisions, allowing Belize to continue exporting fish and fish products to the United States beyond January 1, 2026. The determination is valid through December 31, 2029, unless otherwise notified by NOAA Fisheries.

Belize's application was the culmination of a rigorous process that began in 2020 and required extensive consultations, technical reviews, and demonstrated compliance with marine mammal protection standards.

NOAA's review recognized that Belize:

- Prohibits the intentional killing or injury of marine mammals through legislation such as the Wildlife Protection Act (2014) and Fisheries Resources Act (2020).
- Requires strict monitoring and oversight of fishing vessels, including 100% vessel logbook coverage, 100% dockside inspections, and an observer program.
- Implements reporting requirements for all marine mammal mortalities and serious injuries.
- Bans the use of high seas gillnets and aligns with U.S. standards by operating under international agreements such as ICCAT and IATTC.

This milestone reaffirms Belize's commitment to sustainable fisheries management and marine conservation. It ensures continued access to one of the most important export markets, demonstrating that Belize's regulatory framework meets the highest international standards.

The Ministry extends its gratitude to the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit, the Belize Fisheries Department, and all partners who contributed to this successful outcome. Belize remains committed to strengthening its efforts to minimize the incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals associated with commercial fishing activities.

For more information on NOAA Fisheries' Marine Mammal Protection Act Import Provisions, please visit:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/foreign/marine-mammal-protection/noaa-fisheries-establishes-international-marine-mammal-bycatch-criteria-us-imports>

## **Ends**

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