

**UPDATED PUBLIC STATEMENT OF THE
INSTITUTE OF THE MARINE AFFAIRS 2020**

IN COMPLIANCE WITH SECTIONS 7, 8 AND 9 OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) 1999

In accordance with Sections 7, 8, and 9 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 1999, the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) is required to publish a statement setting out certain information for the benefit of the public.

The Act gives members of the public:

1. A legal right for each person to access information held by the IMA;
2. A legal right for each person to have official information relating to him/her amended where it is incomplete, incorrect or misleading;
3. A legal right to obtain reasons for adverse decisions made regarding applicant's request for information under the FOI Act; and
4. A legal right to complain to the Ombudsman and to apply to the High Court for Judicial Review to challenge adverse decisions made under the FOI Act.

SECTION 7 STATEMENTS

**Section 7 (1) (a) (i)
PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE INSTITUTE OF
MARINE AFFAIRS (IMA)**

The IMA is a statutory body established by Act of Parliament (Chap. 37:01 of the Revised Laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, as amended by Act No. of 1990). Established following negotiations for an agreement signed in 1974 between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the United Nations, through its Executing Agency, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the IMA has been in operation since 1978. In 1990, legislation was amended by Act No. 13 to emphasise and underscore the Institute's regional role and to expand its scope to include marine and other related areas of the environments. It is the only multi-disciplinary marine research organisation in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) states established to conduct inter-disciplinary studies.

Functions

The functions of the IMA, which are discharged with the assistance of research and administrative staff in furtherance to its mandate, are to:

- a. Conduct research and development on the marine and related resources of Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean and adjacent regions;
- b. Conduct research and development on the marine environment and other areas that impact upon the environment of Trinidad and Tobago, and adjacent regions;
- c. Study multiple uses of the sea and coastal zones, resources and use potential in Trinidad and Tobago, and adjacent regions and to evaluate and promote such studies to minimise conflicts which may result from such uses;
- d. Establish at the IMA an Information Centre for collection and dissemination of information on economic, social, technological, environmental and legal developments in marine and coastal zones of the Caribbean and adjacent regions;

- e. Provide information and advice to the government in its formulation of policies relating to the marine and other related aspects of the environment;
- f. Respond to technical enquiries and questions by policy-making organs of the Government, private sector organisations and individuals;
- g. Organise training courses and projects that foster and encourage regional and international collaboration in exploitation of the marine and related environment;
- h. Advise development and optimum utilisation of the marine and coastal resource potential of Trinidad and Tobago; and to
- i. Take action necessary or expedient for proper performance of its functions.

Vision Statement

"To be the Centre of Expertise for Marine Scientific Research in the Caribbean Region."

Mission Statement

"To conduct and foster research and provide advice to support the sustainable management of the coastal and marine areas and resources of Trinidad and Tobago."

Mandate

The Institute's mandate is to collect, analyse and disseminate information relating to the economic, technological, environmental, social and legal developments in marine affairs and to formulate and implement specific programmes/projects.

Reporting

The IMA falls under the purview of the Ministry of Planning and Development and as such the Minister of Planning and Development reports to the Cabinet and Parliament on matters relating to the marine environment. The Institute's Management Team has oversight for the research, operations and support departments. The "Structure of the IMA" outlines the various departments within the IMA.

Structure of the Institute of Marine Affairs

- The Directorate
- The Research Programmes
 - Biodiversity and Ecology
 - Environmental Quality
 - Fisheries and Aquaculture
 - Oceanography and Coastal Processes
 - Geomatic and GIS
 - Marine Governance
- The Information Centre (including the Library Unit)
- The Human Resources Department
- The Information Technology Department
- The Finances and Administrative Department
- The Operations and Support Department

RESPONSIBILITIES OF INTERNAL DIVISIONS AND UNITS (DIRECTORATE)

THE DIRECTORATE

The Directorate assists with policy formulation through its advice to Government ministries and agencies based on applied and scientific research while executing tenets of national policy. The main function of the Directorate is to provide strategic guidance and direction to the research programmes and support departments to ensure that the Institute achieves its research vision, mission, short-term and long-term goals. It comprises the Corporate Secretary/ Legal Advisor and Internal Audit.

- The Internal Audit is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the system of accounting, as prescribed by the Ministry of Finance, is established, implemented and maintained in the IMA. The Unit's primary functions are to safeguard the assets of the Institute while ensuring that all financial records are complete and accurate.

RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

- **Biodiversity and Ecology Research Programme** - conducts fundamental and applied research on wetlands (mangroves and seagrasses), coral reefs, benthic communities and invasive or alien marine species and marine policy
- **Environmental Quality Research Programme** - conducts research on the water and sediment quality of the coastal and marine environments. This includes monitoring of pollutants such as nutrients, heavy metals, bacteria and hydrocarbons. Data generated provides information on the effectiveness of pollution reduction strategies and mitigation control and assists in the interpretation of pollutant effects by showing links between different forms of pollution to sources, bioaccumulation, eutrophication studies and pollution transport. The Programme is also charged with responding to environmental incidents such as oil and chemical spills.
- **Fisheries and Aquaculture Research Programme** - comprises two principal thematic research areas: 1- fisheries with a focus on fisheries biology including age and growth studies and reproductive biology and aquaculture; and 2-aquaculture - freshwater and marine studies aimed at promoting alternative fish supplies through culture technology. The Programme also supports research in marine turtle conservation and responds to environmental incidents such as fish kills.
- **Oceanography and Coastal Processes Research Programme** - conducts research in oceanography and hydrography; sedimentology; coastal dynamics; and, coastal engineering. The data generated from this research programme is used to inform management plans, environmental policies and provide advice on development plans at the macro level.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Public Statement 2020

- **Geomatic and GIS Unit** - provide support to other research department by providing maps/diagrams. It comprise Geographical Information System (GIS) and Remote Sensing.
- **Marine Governance** - conduct research on local, regional and international environmental policies and legislation related to the marine environment including multi-lateral environmental agreement, and makes policy recommendation based on research findings

HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

The principal objective of the Human Resources Services Department is to provide timely and efficient human resources support to the IMA through its Manager and administrative support services.

INFORMATION CENTRE

The Information Centre (IC) supports the Research Programmes of the IMA through the implementation of innovative public education and communication strategies. The Centre also comprises a Library Unit which is responsible for organising and maintaining a current information service that is primarily relevant to the research work conducted at the Institute and is also available for use by the public.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

The Department has overall responsibility to provide and manage the information systems and information technology portfolios of the IMA, as well as providing the necessary Information Technology (IT) support as required.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT

This Department supports the attainment of the organisation's financial and strategic objectives by:

- Safeguarding the Institute's financial & other assets;
- Timely preparation of monthly management and statutory reports; and
- Annual Financial Statement & Budget.

THE OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

The Department is responsible for the major and minor maintenance of capital assets and facilities and is required to manage small to medium-sized construction projects for research and general upkeep of the compound. The Department is also charged with the responsibility to ensure that employees are provided with a safe, healthy and comfortable working environment.

Effect of Functions on Members of the Public

The IMA protects the public's interest by ensuring:

- Provision of marine environmental-related advice to the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago based on their research findings
- Dissemination of current information on the wise use of natural resources to the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, key stakeholders and the public.

Section 7 (1) (a) (ii)

CATEGORIES OF DOCUMENTS IN THE POSSESSION OF THE IMA

The following documents are in the possession of the Institute of Marine Affairs, in accordance with Section 7 (1) (a) (ii) of the FOI Act;

Operational Records

- The Institute of Marine Affairs Act, No 15 of 1976
- The Institute Marine Affairs Act No. 13 of 1990 amends the provisions set out in the Act of Parliament, No. 15 of 1976.
- Legislation
- Research Reports
- Technical and Environmental Incidental Reports
- IMA Symposia and Community Symposia Reports
- Peer-reviewed Research Journal Articles
- Caribbean Marine Science Journal
- Peer-reviewed Journals
- Speeches, Print and Broadcast Media, and News Releases originating in the IMA
- Books, monographs, reference publications
- Outreach Brochures, pamphlets and activity booklets
- Newspaper Article Clippings pertinent to local marine environment

Administration Records

- Strategic Plans
- Policies pertaining to the internal operations of the IMA
- Minutes of Meetings of Board of Governors and Management
- Accounting and Administrative financial records and general files
- General office files necessary for internal administration of the IMA

Section 7 (1) (a) (iii)

MATERIAL PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION, BROADCAST AND/OR INSPECTION

The IMA produced the following documents which are available for inspection to the public;

- The IMA News – a newsletter published three times a year
- Beyond the Blue radio broadcasts
- Specific subject videos
- Outreach brochures and activity booklets
- Books published by the IMA
- Environmental Incident Reports
- Research Reports
- Members of the public can also visit our website for additional information at www.ima.gov.tt

The public may inspect and/or obtain copies of the following material between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday at:

Address: The Library
Institute of Marine Affairs
Hilltop Lane
Chaguaramas

Tel. No: 634-4291 ext. 2403

E-mail: library@ima.gov.tt

Website: www.ima.gov.tt

Section 7 (1) (a) (iv)

LITERATURE AVAILABLE BY SUBSCRIPTION

The Institute of Marine Affairs does not possess any literature available by subscription.

Section 7 (1) (a) (v)

PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN ACCESSING A DOCUMENT FROM THE INSTITUTE OF MARINE AFFAIRS.

The following procedures are to be followed when accessing documents from the IMA, in accordance with Section 7 (1) (a) (v) of the FOI Act.

How to Request Information:

a. General Procedure

The Policy of the IMA is to respond to all requests for information, both oral and written. However, in order to exercise the rights under the FOI Act (for example the right to challenge a decision if a request for information is refused), the applicant must make the request in writing. The applicant must, therefore, complete the appropriate form ([Request for Access to Official Documents](#)) available at the Institute's Library for information that is not readily available to the public.

b. Addressing Requests:

To facilitate prompt handling of the request, it should be addressed to the Designated Officer of the IMA (**see Section 7 (1) (a) (vi)**).

c. Details in the Request

Applicants should provide details that will allow for ready identification and location of the records that are being requested. If insufficient information is provided, clarification will be sought from the applicant. If an applicant is unsure how to write the request or what details to include, they are advised to communicate with the IMA's Designated Officer.

d. Requests not handled under the FOIA

A request under the FOI Act will not be processed to the extent that it asks for information, which is readily available to the public, either from the IMA or from another public authority, e.g. brochures, pamphlets, reports etc.

Responding to Applicant's Request

e. Retrieving Documents

The IMA is required to furnish copies of documents only when they are in its possession or can be retrieved from storage.

f. Furnishing Documents

An applicant is entitled to copies of information the IMA has in its possession, custody or power. The IMA is required to furnish only one copy of a document. If a legible copy of a document cannot be released, the IMA may not attempt to reconstruct it. Instead, the IMA will furnish the best copy possible and note its quality in its reply. Please note the IMA is not compelled to do the following:

- Create new documents. For example, the IMA is not required to write a new programme so that a computer will print information in the format the applicant desires.
- Perform research for the applicant.

Time Limits

g. General

The FOI Act sets a time limit of thirty (30) calendar days for determination of a request for

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Public Statement 2020

access to documents. The IMA is required to meet this deadline by granting the request for access to information as soon as practicable but no later than 30 days, as required by Section 15 of the FOI Act. If a decision is taken to grant access to the information requested, the applicant will be permitted to inspect the documents and/or be provided with copies. Should the IMA fail to meet the deadline, the FOI Act gives the applicant the right to proceed as though the request has been denied. If it appears that processing the request may take longer than the statutory limit, the IMA would acknowledge the request and advise the applicant of its status. Since there is a possibility that requests may be incorrectly addressed or misdirected, the applicant may wish to call or write to confirm that the IMA has received the request and to ascertain its status.

h. Time Allowed

We will determine whether to grant your request for access to information as soon as practicable but no later than 30 days as required by Section 15 of the FOI Act. If a decision is taken to grant access to the information requested, you will be permitted to inspect the documents and/or be provided with copies.

i. Fees and Charges

Section 17(1) stipulates that no fee shall be charged by a public authority for the making of a request for access to an official document. However, where access to an official document is to be given in the form of printed copies or copies in some other form, such as a tape, disk, film or other material, the applicant will be required to pay the prescribed fee incurred by the duplication of the said material. Similarly, where documents in the public domain are made available to a member of the public, the IMA may charge duplication fees in accordance with its normal reprographics policy.

Section 7 (1) (a) (vi) DESIGNATED OFFICERS IN THE INSTITUTE OF MARINE AFFAIRS

The following are the Designated Officers charged with the responsibility for obtaining documents on request by the public in accordance with Section 7(1) (a) (vi) of the FOI Act.

The Designated Officer:

Ms. Lorraine Barrow
Job Title: Librarian
Library
Institute of Marine Affairs
Hilltop Lane
Phone: 634-4291 ext. 2403
Email: lbarrow@ima.gov.tt

The Alternate Officer:

Ms. Arlene Johnson
Alternate Officer
Job Title: Executive Assistant
Institute of Marine Affairs
Hilltop Lane
Chaguaramas
Phone: 634-4291 ext. 2512
Email: ajohnson@ima.gov.tt

These Officers in the Institute of Marine Affairs responsible for:

- The initial receipt of and action upon notices under Section 10,
- Requests for access to documents under Section 13, and
- Applications for correction of personal information under Section 36 of the FOI Act.

Section 7 (1) (a)(vii) ADVISORY BOARDS, COUNCILS, COMMITTEES, AND OTHER BODIES (where meetings, minutes are open to the public) Section 7 (1) (a) (vii).

There are currently no Advisory Boards, Councils, Committees and other Bodies at this time.

Section 7 (1) (a) (viii) LIBRARY/READING ROOM FACILITIES

The Institute of Marine Affairs has a Reading Room/Library in accordance with Section 7 (1) (a) (viii) of the FOI Act. Information can be accessed from the IMA Library. The public is invited to make general enquiries of our Librarian at 623-4291 ext. 2403 or via e-mail at lbarrow@ima.gov.tt. The Reading Room in the IMA is located in the Information Centre Building, Institute of Marine Affairs, Hilltop Lane, Chaguaramas. It is open to the public from Mondays to Fridays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Policy of the Institute of Marine Affairs for the provision of copies of documents which are readily available to the public

Members of the public may:

- Indicate the form in which the copies are to be made available e.g. soft or hard copies, and must take into consideration, the possibility that the copies may not be available in the form required.
- Be required to supply copying paper for hard copies in instances where requests require large amounts of paper. This is to be determined at the discretion of the Institute of Marine Affairs.

SECTION 8 STATEMENTS

Section 8 (1) (a) (i)

Documents containing interpretations or particulars of written laws or schemes administered by the Institute of Marine Affairs, not being particulars contained in another written law;

At this time, the IMA has no such documents.

Section 8 (1) (a) (ii)

Manuals, rules of procedures, statements of policy, records of decisions, letters of advice to persons external to the IMA, or similar documents containing rules, policies, practices or precedents.

There are other documents which guide the operations of the IMA. Some of these documents can be purchased from the Government Printery, and others can be accessed on-line via:

- www.ttparliament.org or
- www.ttconnect.gov.tt or
- www.finance.gov.tt

The following applies;

- Trinidad and Tobago Gazette
- Hansard Reports relating to Debates in the Senate and House of Representatives
- Circular memoranda from the Ministry of Finance, Comptroller of Accounts, Chief Personnel Officer, Director of Public Administration and other Departments
- Reports of Government Agencies
- Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP)
- Reports of Government Agencies
- Policies of agencies within the purview of the Ministry Estimates of Expenditure, Recurrent and Development Programme
- Procurement Policies and Guidelines
- Financial Regulations and Instructions
- Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and Development Programmes
- Health and Safety Guidelines

SECTION 9 STATEMENTS

Section 9 (1) (a)

In accordance with Section 9 (1) (a-m), the following reports are available at the IMA's Reading Room/Library located in the Information Centre Building, Institute of Marine Affairs, Hilltop Lane, Chaguaramas.

- The IMA Annual Reports
- The IMA News (triannual newsletter)
- IMA Research Reports
- Environmental Incident Reports
- Newsletters of other Ministries and Government Agencies (e.g. Ministry of Planning and Development, Ministry of Finance and the Environmental Management Authority (EMA))