

Statistics of Treasure Hunting In The Bahamas

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1972 - 1999

- In 1999 the Government put in place a moratorium on the Search and Salvage of Historic Shipwrecks in The Bahamas.
- From 1972 – 1999 71 permits for the search and recovery of shipwrecks were issued

1972 – 1999 Salvage Permits Issued

Number	Issued	Expired	Area	Notes
1	Jan 72	Jan 74	Little Bahama Bank	The first recoveries from the Maravillas, including gold bullion, silver bars, gold and silver coins, emeralds and jewelry – Bob Marx – known corruption on both sides
2	Dec 78	Oct 83	Man-O-War	No file can be found
3	Aug 79	Sep 84	Orange Cay	No activity recorded on file – known Spanish Shipwrecks in the area
4	Aug 79	Jun 81	Cay Lobos	No activity recorded on file
5	Jan 80	Nov 82	Lucaya Beach	Some survey, no recoveries indicated on file
6	Dec 80	Jan 80	Ragged Island	No activity recorded on file
7	Apr 81	Apr 82	North Bimini	Some gold and silver coins recovered – alleged to be off loaded in Palm Beach
8	Apr 81	Dec 83	Harbour Cay	No file can be found
9	Dec 81	Feb 84	Gorda Cay	No file can be found
10	Apr 82	Feb 84	Lucaya Beach	No activity recorded on file

1972 – 1999 Salvage Permits Issued - cont

Number	Issued	Expired	Area	Notes
11	May 82	Feb 84	Memory Rock	No file can be found
12	Aug 82	Feb 85	Little Bahama Bank	Extremely complex file regarding allegations, disputes, denials, lawsuits, charges and counter charges by competing salvors in Maravillas area – limited recoveries
13	Feb 83	Jun 84	South Shore	No activity recorded on file
14	Jun 83	Jan 89	Ginger Breads	Files contain extensive documentation including incriminating photographs concerning falsified records and unreported artifacts – extensive recoveries said to be from wreck of 1880 and Spanish Galleon “Santa Rosa”
15	Jul 83	Jan 84	Great Guana Cay	Field work conducted, but no recoveries indicated in file
16	Aug 83	Sep 84	Moselle Bank	No activity recorded on file
17	Sep 83	Jun 85	Cay Sal	No activity recorded on file
18	Feb 84	Jan 85	Settlement Point	No file can be found

1972 – 1999 Salvage Permits Issued - cont

Number	Issued	Expired	Area	Notes
19	Jul 84	May 96	Little Bahama Bank	Extensive recoveries of high value, government received no artifacts only \$328,000 from sales
20	Mar 85	Sep 86	Memory Rock	Cannon Found – permit cancelled by salvor, no reason given
21	Sep 86	Oct 86	Highborn Cay	Research project – extensive archaeological research by Texas A&M – however, the government does not have in its files, what was recovered and any final reports
22	Sep 86	Mar 97	Stranger Cay	Many artifacts recovered, no share to government – Discovered a US Civil War Supply Ship
23	Aug 89	Aug 97	Lynard Cay	Field work and recoveries completed, difficult to say what came from where. Artifacts undivided confused by false claims of platinum cannons
24	Feb 90	Aug 99	Great Bahama Bank	Numerous cannons removed from multiple sites. Works conducted without government representatives
25	Sep 90	Sep 91	Little Bahama Bank	Field work conducted and shipwrecks mentioned, but no locations. No recoveries included in file

1972 – 1999 Salvage Permits Issued - cont

Number	Issued	Expired	Area	Notes
26	Sep 90	Sep 99	Memory Rock	Extensive archaeological excavations with proper inventory, conservation and report writing – Melfisher Maritime Heritage Society – BEST CASE
27	Sep 90	Oct 91	Elbow Cay	No activity recorded on file
28	Apr 91	Apr 94	Inaguas	Located two shipwrecks with over 60 cannons. No recoveries indicated on file. Group constantly writes government for permission to excavate. Rumours persist that site was extensively illegally salvaged and group looking for legitimacy to sell artifacts
29	Apr 91	Apr 93	Little Bahama Bank	No activity recorded on file
30	Apr 91	Apr 92	Cat Island	No field work indicated on file, but mention of artifacts viewed by government
31	Jun 91	Jun 94	Nun Jack Cay	No activity recorded on file
32	Sep 91	Sep 92	Walkers Cay	No activity recorded on file – historic documents indicate Maravillas salvage vessel wrecked in this location

1972 – 1999 Salvage Permits Issued - cont

Number	Issued	Expired	Area	Notes
33	Mar 92	Mar 95	High Rock	Gold jewelry, silver coins, cannons, potter recovered. Artifacts not divided with government because of overinflated value assigned to astrolabe found.
34	Mar 92	Mar 96	Great Issacs	Surveys conducted but no shipwrecks said to be discovered.
35	Apr 92	Apr 99	North Eleuthera	Extensive recoveries of cargo ship Baltic – collection held by government.
36	May 92	Jan 95	Acklins	No activity recorded on file
37	Aug 92	Aug 93	Abaco	Field work conducted, several shipwrecks reported, but no precise locations, recoveries made, but no indication of inventory, division or present location of artifacts
38	Nov 92	Nov 93	Ragged Island	No activity recorded on file
39	Nov 92	-	-	No information on file
40	Nov 92	Mar 96	Grand Bahama	Artifacts recovered but no inventory, report claims 2 shipwrecks discovered
41	Dec 92	Dec 93	Moore's Island	Shipwrecks found, artifacts recovered, difficult to tell if division happened

1972 – 1999 Salvage Permits Issued - cont

Number	Issued	Expired	Area	Notes
42	Jan 93	Jan 94	Long Island	Shipwrecks found with GPS locations, but no recoveries indicated on file
43	Apr 93	Jan 94	Acklins	No activity recorded on file
44	May 93	May 97	Eleuthera and Cat Island	No activity recorded on file
45	Aug 93	Aug 94	Little Bahama Bank	No activity recorded on file
46	Nov 93	Nov 95	Old Bahama Bank	Artifacts recovered and reportedly thrown back in sea for lack of value
47	Dec 93	Dec 94	Ragged Island	Field work with no locations of recoveries, artifacts put back in ocean for future recovery
48	Jan 94	Jan 95	Cay Sal	Minor recoveries, file indicates choice artifacts offered to government but no record of division
49	Feb 94	Feb 95	Grand Bahama	Some items recovered and divided by government
50	Apr 94	Apr 95	Walkers Cay	No activity recorded on file

1972 – 1999 Salvage Permits Issued - cont

Number	Issued	Expired	Area	Notes
51	Jul 94	Jul 97	Great Inagua	Field work conducted, shipwrecks noted, but no locations. Artifacts collected but no indication of where they went or whether there was a division
52	Jul 94	Jul 95	-	No activity reported on file
53	Feb 95	Feb 96	Acklins	No activity reported on file
54	Mar 95	Mar 96	Little Abaco	One week field work, nothing else indicated on file
55	Mar 95	May 98	Great Inagua	Field work conducted, few recoveries, no division indicated on file
56	Dec 95	Jan 98	Sothern Bahamas	No findings or recoveries indicated in reports
57	Jan 96	Jan 98	Little Bahama Bank	Recoveries but no information on field visit, fieldwork. Potential scam with recoveries stolen from Florida, but no evidence
58	Jan 96	Nov 99	Great Bahama Bank	Two shipwrecks found with GPS locations, no recoveries indicated on file
59	Apr 96	Apr 99	Crooked Island	No activity reported on file

1972 – 1999 Salvage Permits Issued - cont

Number	Issued	Expired	Area	Notes
60	May 96	May 99	Cay Sal	Two shipwrecks indicated, but no locations provided. No recoveries on file
61	Nov 97	Mar 98	Little Bahama Bank	Field work conducted, artifacts collected, but no location indicated. Not sure of division with government or location of artifacts
62	May 98	May 99	Little Bahama Bank	No artifacts, shipwrecks or recoveries indicated on file – Maravillas area
63	Sep 89	Sep 90	-	NO activity recorded on file
64	No date	No date	Grand Bahama	No activity recorded on file
65	No date	No date	Orange Cay	Untreated emeralds in bank vault awaiting division. Only other evidence of recoveries is a report from Ministry of Finance confirming viewing of emeralds.

6 other projects I can find no information in file on, but evidence of there happening based on news reports, books and recoveries

Recap

- 46 permits with NO recoveries
- 26 permits with either no recorded fieldwork or no file
- 19 permits with recoveries, but most not divided or account can be given of artifacts
- 2 archaeological projects
- 3 projects with divisions
- 1 with cash payout

The Way Forward

Abandoned Wrecks Act - Repealed

Antiquities Act (1998)

Antiquities Amended Act (2011)

- Defines Underwater Heritage
- Tries to marry Commercial Salvage with Underwater Archaeology Principles
- Fundamentally opposed to the UNESCO UHC
- Currently 19 applications before government

The Bahamas

Country/Region	EEZ (km2)
The Bahamas	654,715
Cuba	350,751
Puerto Rico	177,685
Jamaica	258,137
Hispaniola	382,658
Dominican Republic	255,898
Haiti	126,760

Current – Cash for Gold



Looted of Grand Bahama



Dave Crooks says:

April 24, 2011 at 8:08 am



Because of the onerous (and totally unreasonable) government requirements, treasure hunting without a license will continue in the Bahamas...and the government won't catch most of the salvors. Either the government must salvage all the wrecks in Bahamian waters or let entrepreneurs do it. We should not let these valuable artifacts rot in oblivion, which is what the Bahamian government's plan is.

Reply

Thorgrim Karlssen says:

February 26, 2011 at 10:21 pm



Ho Hum.... another treasure ship looted from the Bahama Bank.. If the ship (or fleet, more than likely) is located between Walker's cay and Grand Bahama, this is one of several sites that has been picked over periodically by lucky divers and curious yachtsmen. This happens with boring regularity. Millions of dollars worth of sunken artifacts lie beneath the sands of the Great and Little Bahama Banks, some even so shallow as to be easily exposed by directed thrust from boats' propellers, and especially after storms. Shamefully, (allegedly) the laws were even changed to allow for a reversal of the share ratio (formerly Government 75%-Salvor 25%) after pressure from local and foreign treasure hunters. Some local seekers (allegedly known to the Bahamas National Trust) have gotten so rich they now do nothing else but research and blow sand on the banks.

Reply

Since 1999, the AMMC has recommended policies for responsible and modern management of historic shipwrecks in Bahamian waters based on conservation, public access, respect for national heritage, and public benefit through heritage tourism.