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ABOUT SPORT AND TOURISM FISHING

In any of its modalities, as tourism fishing which is linked to tour operators, or as sport fishing which is practiced privately without the participation of tour operators, it means recreation or a sport for the anglers and economic development for the associated activities that are generated therefrom.

It is an economic stimulus by the practice of the activity itself, not from the sale of a fishing product.



While encouraging a better use of our natural resources, tourism fishing promotes economic and social development in rural areas.

Its potential demands special attention in order to ensure quality tourism development.

The main issues related to sport and tourism fishing that should be considered when assessing the activity, are:

- The fishing resources
- The anglers
- The fishing boats
- The associated services

The practice of a sport and tourism fishing with a responsible approach by encouraging the participation of all anglers, residents, visitors, industry, fishing and tourism authorities as the stakeholders, would be necessary in order to safeguard the values of appreciation and conservation of our natural resources and the environment.

The sustainability of the fishery resources and the practice of sport and tourism fishing in our country depends on this approach, so all anglers and those linked to the activity, must be called upon to collaborate.



Sport fishing can be practiced from a boat or from shore, in inland or offshore. Offshore fishing can be performed near the coast or in sea waters where the target species are the highly migratory ones.

Tourism fishing is concentrated in this category where billfish (mainly marlins and sailfish) are the star performers of the activity.



Among the main benefits derived from sport and tourism fishing we can mention the following:



It provides the opportunity of enjoying quality outdoor moments with family and friends.



Permits you to observe the quality of the marine environment and conservation and transmit ethical values about conservancy to the up coming generations.



Generates a positive economic impact through employment, foreign exchange rates and incomes that support businesses that provide services and supplies to the activity and that contribute with their taxes at a national level.



Panama is a privileged destination for local anglers and for those from around the world in search of a unique experience, as the country is well known for its exuberant nature and the presence of important species in its waters. Panama has established many world fishing records so the activity represents a great potential.

In Fish Base there are at least 182 species (including billfish) reported for Panama sport and tourism fishing.



A vast majority of the listed species are also of interest for commercial fishing. Among the main species are: mahi mahi, wahoo, tuna, mackerel, parrot fish, snappers and groupers.

The progressive growth of the sport fishing industry throughout the years in a unrecognized and non regulated way, in addition to a weak control of fishing operations throughout the country, requires modern legislation that allows and promotes the exercise of the activity while at the same time ensuring the sustainability of species.



Sport and tourism fishing is an extractive activity that is part of the fishing sector, but it also has a valuable tourism component, thus the Fishing Authority should govern the activity in coordination with the Tourism Authority and others as appropriate.

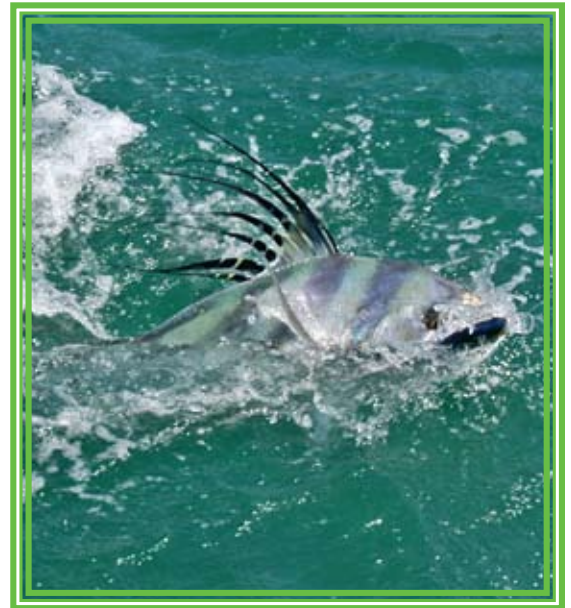
It is the responsibility of the new authorities to take the necessary steps to ensure that sport and tourism fishing provide economic benefits to the country at sustainable levels.

A SUSTAINABLE FISHING ACTIVITY WILL REQUIRE:

1. Abundant and healthy fish populations.
2. Non degraded ecosystems.
3. A well informed and educated community, concerning the importance of marine resources and ecosystems.
4. Political levels committed with the conservation of resources for present and future generations.

THE MAIN ACTIONS THAT WE BELIEVE IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER, ARE:

1. Practice of responsible fisheries at a national level (including artisanal, commercial, sport and tourism fishing) as well as the related activities.
2. Strategic alliances between anglers, small scale fishermen, institutions, research and conservation organizations, all sharing a common vision.
3. National Plan for Sport and Tourism Fishing.



An important step that we hope the new authorities take is to recognize the value of the activity as an important economic production engine.

Therefore it is essential to have an adequate legal framework for the species protection, the regulation of the activity and the performance of research and surveillance systems. All of this to ensure efficient maintenance of the existing areas with good fishing production and for the recovery of those with evidence of stock depletion.

Another aspect that the authorities should promote is the development of economic and tourism activities associated with sport and tourism fishing.

As pending tasks we have the followings:

- Assess the status of sport and tourism fishing in Panama and identify the opportunities to improve their management.
- Build a reliable biological and economic database.
- Identify resources management measures and ecosystem conservation tools based on science.
- Define the interrelationships between the different types of fisheries.
- Promote regional agreements on highly migratory species such as billfish.

All of these aspects will require the strengthening of the research platform at the national level by providing the financial, technical and human resources necessary to do the job successfully.

BUT THE MOST URGENT IS:

To improve enforcement of fishing regulations for which the necessary resources to run an adequate surveillance system is urgent requirement.



WE NEED OUR AUTHORITIES TO RECOGNIZE
THAT WE ARE MORE VALUABLE TO OUR COUNTRY,
ALIVE!

Billy the Billfish

