



Vol.1, No.4, Year 1

www.fconamar.org

October 2006

URGENT ACTIONS!

IMPROVE THE ENFORCEMENT OF FISHING LEGISLATION

INTRODUCTION

Panama has taken firm steps towards the modernization of its legislation to guarantee the protection of marine resources in general.

As examples we want to stress the following initiatives: Law No.44 of July 26 of 2004 that creates the National Park of Coiba; Law No.13 of May 5 of 2005 which establishes the Marine Corridor of Panama for the protection and conservation of marine mammals and Law No.9 of March 16 of 2006 that bans shark finning in the jurisdictional waters of the Republic of Panama.

Additionally there is an entire collection of regulations that establish complementary dispositions on several matters for sport fishing, small scale fishing and commercial fishing.

THE PROBLEM

The real problem does not consist in outdated legislation but in the absence of effective measures of enforcement and follow up, simply because the governmental entities that have jurisdiction do not have the necessary physical, human and financial resources to watch over the conservation and management measures that have been adopted.

As a result, fishing legislation is permanently violated by local fishermen and by foreign commercial fishing vessels.

Recent examples of these violations are: sea cucumber extraction, snappers taken with gill nets, the shark finning case in Veraguas Province, billfish slaughter by an illegal fishing boat from Costa Rica (presumably within the limits of the National Park of Coiba), swordfish commercialization, and the frequent incursions of boats in the reserved area for sport and tourism fishing in Darien, within a radius of 20 miles taking Piñas Bay Point as the epicenter.

Photos: CONAMAR

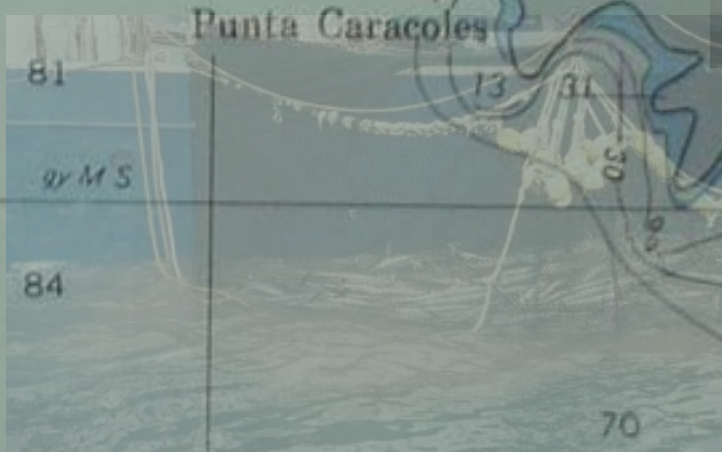
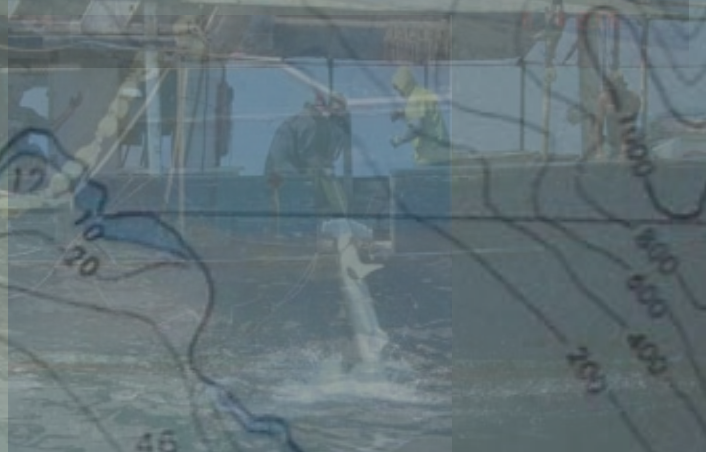


Photo: Wolcott Henry, 2005-Marine Photobank

Specifically in the case of the Darien Province we have observed that since the last months of 2004, the patrol assigned for the area was withdrawn, resulting in all type of illicit acts by commercial and small scale fishing vessels.

The authorities claim that they do not have a sufficient budget for fuel as well as other expenses, and this situation significantly raised the volume of the unpunished incursions of commercial fishing boats in non commercial fishing restricted areas.

It is important to act, upon such an existing situation and that is the main reason that Piñas Bay Resorts and Tropic Star Group, have joined efforts with CONAMAR Foundation to in a short term, obtain a suitable patrol boat that will support the inspection tasks in Darien's waters. For such an end, CONAMAR Foundation is doing all it can in order that the relevant authority appoint and train an inspector in charge of coordination with other governmental agencies as the National Police and the National Authority of the Environment.



Photo: Panamá América



Photo: Wolcott Henry, 2005-Marine Photobank

SOLUTIONS:

The promotion and approval of new regulations without specific actions that guarantee the observance and enforcement of the fishing laws presently on the books, will be a vain effort.

A positive example with good results in natural resources management that diminished the negative impact of potential illicit activities within the limits of the Coiba National Park has been the strengthening of patrolling efforts through a protection and surveillance program between the Ecological Police of the National Authority for the Environment and the MarViva Foundation.

Precisely, this type of model of strategic alliances among users of the resources, private organizations and authorities will provide the required effectiveness for the surveillance of panamanian national waters.

Additionally, the Panamanian Government must demonstrate their political will to correct the existent weakness in the current mechanism of surveillance, follow up and enforcement of the fishing legislation and regulatory framework. This implies increments in the budget assignments for the pertinent institutions and other actions, for instance the application of Executive Decree No.83 of April 5th of 2005, that establishes the installation of satellite monitoring system for the industrial fishing fleet.

In the same way, it should promote cooperation mechanisms for monitoring, control and fishing surveillance, negotiating international agreements and technical assistance available to reach such a goal.

PROJECTION:

CONAMAR Foundation is providing support to the authorities in order to contribute with surveillance of Darien waters and hopes to consolidate different actions at a national level, aimed towards conservation of marine and forestry resources.

During the course of the present year CONAMAR Foundation has invested an estimated of \$50,000 (FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS) which has allowed for the maintenance of a team of forest rangers, designated a full time person for the Foundation, created and put online a web site with information of interest and as an educational instrument, prepare brochures and other materials concerning the Foundation, and set up a special vessel to support the surveillance missions.

Great part of these funds have been donated by Piñas Bay Resorts and Tropic Star Group as a "seed capital" but the Foundation needs additional funds to carry out specific programs as forest and marine surveillance (that includes salaries, fuel, maintenance, equipments and others), and community education. These funds will permit CONAMAR Foundation to advance towards the achievement of its objectives.

