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BEST PRACTICES FOR RECREATIONAL ANGLERS

The practice of sport fishing in the Republic of Panama, has increased during the last decades influenced mainly by international tourism, local tourism, members of Sport Fishing Clubs, and the independent fishermen that practice the sport.

However, this growth did not occur in accordance with the best practices that should be observed by every responsible angler, and recently we have detected that some persons utilize sport fishing as a front for unlicensed commercial fishing operations, that land big volumes of fish with the intent of selling it for a profit.

Invited by the General Director of FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), the Ministers responsible for fisheries met in Rome on 10-11 March 1999 as an indication of their firm intention to implement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

Sailfish, *Istiophorus platypterus*
caught and released.

The Ministerial Meeting adopted unanimously the Rome Declaration for Responsible Fisheries which “noted the growing importance of recreational fishing and stressed the need for it to be conducted in a sustainable manner and consistent with the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.”

The Foundation for the Conservancy of the Sea, Nature and Marine Species (CONAMAR), with the desire to promote in our country a Responsible Sport Fishery which contributes with the conservation of live aquatic resources, respecting ecosystems and biodiversity, has developed and is releasing BEST PRACTICES FOR RECREATIONAL ANGLERS as a first action of many others to follow that are part of the process that has been initiated to achieve the Foundation’s objectives.





GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

1. The right to fish carries with it the obligation to do so in a responsible manner so as to ensure effective conservation and management of the living aquatic resources.
2. Colaboration with authorities is of the essence in order to reach management measures that ensure conservation and a long term sustainable use of species, including those belonging, dependent, or associated to the same ecosystem.
3. The use of fishing gear and practices, that are environmentally safe for the biodiversity and conservation of the species and aquatic ecosystems, should be considered a priority.
4. The understanding of the problems related with the conservation of the resources is important for society in general, so participation and support in training and awareness activities related with the need for the protection and management of fishing resources and the environment, is a special need.
5. As far as possible, colaboration with the follow up, control, surveillance and observance of fishing regulations should be provided to the pertinent authorities.
6. All recreational practices must respect the security of human life and the protection of the aquatic environment.

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SECURITY AT SEA:

1. Observe the safety measures for fishing as well as for navigation.
2. Carry out a preventive maintenance schedule in order to avoid excessive fuel consumption or mechanical failure.

RESPONSIBLE FISHING:

1. Support fishing clubs and organizations that promote the practice of responsible sport fishing in their tournaments and among their membership.
2. Use circle hooks with dead or live bait.
3. Remember the law requires you to apply catch and release techniques with all billfish. Do your best to make sure that the word gets out that billfish are protected in all panamanian waters.
4. When you catch other species of fish, land just the necessary amount to meet your personal needs and release the remainder alive.
5. While sport fishing avoid exhausting the fish so they can survive when they are released.
6. Do not promote fish mounting.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK:

1. Support the observance of current fishing regulations.
2. Report to the relevant authority any irregularity that you observe, whether it comes from recreational anglers or from commercial fishermen.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY:

1. Do not dispose of garbage or spill fuel, oil or any pollutant waste at sea or in any other aquatic environment.
2. Do not consume prohibited species or those which do not meet the minimum size requirements.
3. Avoid the use of products that become dangerous waste at the end of their useful life.
4. Support long term solutions that contribute with the sustainability of both sport and commercial fishing.
5. Become a supporting agent of these best practices and promote the collective responsibility that each one of us have with our environment, specially among the new generations.