
Subject: Vessel Monitoring in Costa Rica
Posted by [SanCocho](#) on Wed, 09 Sep 2009 13:27:53 GMT
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TBF succeeds in push of Vessel Monitoring System
mandate in Costa Rican waters

The Billfish Foundation continues building strong relations on fisheries conservation

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica and FT. LAUDERDALE, Fla., USA (September 7, 2009) -- New regulations enacted by INCOPECSA, the Costa Rican fisheries agency, will require electronic vessel monitoring systems (VMS) on all commercial vessels larger than 56 ft. that operate in Costa Rican waters. These rules were published on August 5 and all affected vessels must have operational systems within six months of that date.

The Billfish Foundation's (TBF) Chief Scientist Dr. Russell Nelson and TBF Central American Conservation Director Herbert Nanne have been pushing INCOPECSA to develop these regulations for a year-and-a-half. "The mandatory use of VMS will allow Costa Rica's officials to monitor via satellite the exact positions of all purse seine vessels and large longliners and more easily enforce closed areas and other conservation directives," said Nelson.

Nanne added, "Costa Rica does not allow purse seine fishing on FADs (fish aggregating devices) because of the high bycatch of billfish, dorado, wahoo and other finfish, but we have for years suspected the foreign permitted vessels of using this destructive fishing practice in Costa Rica's waters. Now VMS will reveal whether they are fishing inside our 12 mile territorial waters, or going into protected areas like the Coco Island National Park waters."

Ellen Peel, TBF President, observed, "We all owe Luis Dobles, the new President of INCOPECSA for taking yet another step towards stronger fisheries conservation. Hopefully purse seiners being tracked on VMS will think twice before repeating last year's incident in which several sport fishing boats after being deliberately surrounded by a large purse seine and threatened while peacefully trolling for tuna."

The regulations taking effect Feb. 5, 2010, do not apply to private and charter sportfishing vessels.

Over the past year Costa Rica has been proactive in enacting conservation laws and measures to control commercial overfishing. Last December INCOPECSA passed measures protecting its sailfish and other sport fishing resources by putting a halt to the exportation of sailfish meat and stopped the use of live bait by the commercial long-liners. A month later Costa Rica formed the first national sport fishing federation representing the interests of its anglers and the sport fishing tourism industry.

Established in 1986 The Billfish Foundation by the late Winthrop P. Rockefeller is the only non-profit organization dedicated solely to conserving and enhancing billfish populations worldwide. With world headquarters in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., USA, TBF's comprehensive network of members and supporters includes anglers, captains, mates, tournament directors, clubs, sport fishing and tourism businesses. By coordinating efforts and speaking with one voice,

the organization works for solutions that are good for billfish, not punitive to recreational anglers and good for the local economy.

TBF's web site is www.billfish.org and its phone number is 800-438-8247, ext 108 for Ellen Peel or (561) 449-9637 for Dr. Nelson.
