

# A New Approach to Managing Marine Resources in Baja California Sur:

## An Evolving Case History

R. Nelson and G. Alvarez

This project was funded by The Billfish Foundation and La Fundación para la Conservación de los Picudos, A.C

## Baja California Sur

### Marine Resources form Base of Economic Activity ---

#### Ecotourism

– sportfishing (~\$100 million U.S. per annum); whale watching, diving, kayaking, birding, etc

– Declining resource base threatens this economic activity.

commercial landings declines, shifts in species composition;  
declining recreational catches and encounter rates;  
hammerhead shark aggregations gone .....

### A Variety of Terrestrial and Marine “MPA”s in

#### BCS:

- Variety of zones and uses controlled:
- Revillagigedo Islands – no extraction
- Complejo Lagunar Ojo de Liebre;
- Bahía de Loreto;
- Cabo Pulmo; Estero San Jose.
- Cabo San Lucas – Cascades de Arena; etc ...
- The islands within the Gulf of California (Sea of Cortes)

### Year: 2000

- La Fundación para la Conservación de los Picudos, A.C (FCP)
- The Billfish Foundation (TBF)
  
- 48 new longline & drift gillnet permits for “sharks”
  - Fish within the conservation zones

- 80% to 90% of catch anticipated to be marlins, sailfish and protected species : sea turtles, marine mammals

## Process Evaluation

- Review of fisheries laws, regulations
- Interviews with federal marine fisheries, protected resources officials, commercial & sport fishing, academic, conservation interests
- Data & research review
- SEAWATCH – time series of interviews with artisanal fishers, divers, subsistence and sport fishers around Sea of Cortez

## Focus on Five Areas

- Fisheries Management
- Data Collection and Research
- Enforcement
- Program Funding
- Political processes – direct and indirect points of influence on outcomes

## General Conclusions

- Centralized federal management w/out transparency, regional or broad constituent input
- Interactions between sport fishing interests and federal fisheries officials: conflict w/out communication
- Virtually no stock assessment capability, science based management, direct or indirect controls on harvest or effort
- Data collection efforts inadequate for modern fisheries management

## General Conclusions

- Little coordination between government and academia on applied fisheries research
- Enforcement inadequate (policy and resource limitations) – inter agency “turf wars”
- Quasi-legal “permits” circumvent conservation efforts
- Organized commercial fishing interest dominated political arena – subsidies ramping up effort

## General Conclusions

- Federal Tourism agency lacked understanding of sport fishing and marine ecotourism potential
- Most Mexican conservation NGOs not focused on fisheries
- Declining resources, species shifts, negative economic impacts, little hope for positive change
- Commercial fisheries largely overcapitalized and facing diminished resource base

## TBF & FCP: Action Plan

- 1) **expand the support base for marine conservation by including Mexico’s tourism industry and the offices of the Secretary of Tourism;**
- 2) **increase the transparency of decision making and input from constituents in the management process and transform conflicts into positive interactions;**
- 3) **continue to resist efforts to undermine the few conservation safe guards already in place;**
- 4) **promote an increased enforcement presence and conservation commitment;**
- 5) **secure a stronger voice for sportfishing and conservation interests through educational campaigns intended to inform the public and conservation community about existing marine fisheries problems; and**
- 6) **gain increased influence over data collection, research and enforcement efforts by seeking control over the use and distribution of license fees.**

**Success Would Depend on Our Ability To**

**Link Conservation Issues With Sustainable Economic  
Development**

**A Science and Fact Based Approach**

**Year: 2001**

- 50 mile & Billfish Conservation Zones placed into Federal Law
- *TIANGUIS* >> Successful overtures to Sec. of Tourism
- Newspaper, television and web-based media led to stories on fisheries and protected species interactions
- Congress launches series of 25 meetings to review fisheries management

## Year: 2002

- *PESCA* becomes *CONAPESCA*
  - Cabinet officials (*Consejo Tecnico*) oversight- Tourism, Environment, Navy, Natural Resources, Economy, communications, Transportation join Sec. of Agriculture
- *CONAPESCA* Citizens Advisory committee (*Consejo Nacional de Pesca y Acuicultura*) – 2 seats for sport fishing representation

## Year: 2002

- State Advisory Body (*Consejo Estatal de Pesca y Acuicultura de BCS*)

### *Comision Nautico-Recreativa y de Pesca Deportiva*)

National advisory body to federal government on marine related tourism and sport fishing issues

Re-organization has not resolved all identified problems

Has opened the process to potential reforms

- VMS proposal meets with acceptance
- Shark Management Plan & 240 potential new longline vessels in Sea of Cortez on hold – issue not resolved

## Center for Marine Protection

- Research and Data Collection
  - Enforcement
  - Education and Outreach
  - Conservation Advocacy
- 
- No public funds will be used for administrative or advocacy work – Center will conduct grants program for FONMAR

## What Lies Ahead?

- Guardianes de Mar: local stewardship and participatory enforcement efforts throughout BCS
- Internet based license sales
- Expand coordination with various Cabinet offices & CONAPESCA
- Maintain CONAPESCA after new federal elections
- Comparative economics studies – Instituto Mexicano de la Competitividad
- Research Grants Program
- TBF has begun a parallel effort in Costa Rica
- Center will need additional private donations to succeed