



Observing Today...Conserving for Tomorrow

The IGFTO Observer

A newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers

Volume 6

Edition 1



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Observing Highlights for 2016



In 2016, IGFTO sent 133 observers to 11 billfish tournaments in Florida, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Aruba, San

Juan and San Salvador. Our observers participated along with 305 boats in releasing a total of 9,133 billfish. Among these were 8,841 sailfish, 226 blue marlin, and 66 white marlin. Our observers collectively received high marks from their captains for their hard work. Congratulations on a job well done!

We Support Conservation and Like Organizations

Our organization made great strides in 2016 making charitable contributions to organizations consistent with the IGFTO mission statement. And our efforts were much appreciated:

“On behalf of the Presidential Challenge Charitable Foundation, Inc. I thank you and IGFTO for the \$1,000 contribution. The donation is very timely and important in allowing our Foundation to continue our work in Central America and the southern Caribbean. We appreciate the work of IGFTO in working with observers from all over the country to allow us to continue fishing tournaments of high integrity.”

Joan M. Vernon
President

Art McDonald Elected VP and Director of IGFTO



Art McDonald, a charter member of the IGFTO has been elected VP & Director of the IGFTO. Art has held a USCG

Captain's License for over 40 years, completed the IGFA certified training program in 2006 and has owned and captained numerous sport fishing boats.

He has fished all over the world during the past 50 years including Australia, Bermuda, the Canary Islands, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Tahiti, Turks & Caicos, and Venezuela in addition to numerous locales in the US. He is a past IGFA World Record Holder in the men's 16 lb. test White Marlin category.

Art has been an IGFTO Observer coordinator for a number of tournaments during the past several years. Art brings strong leadership skills and marketing expertise to our organization. He is current member of both IGFA and The Billfish Foundation. Welcome aboard Art!

Who Exactly Is the IGFTO

Your observer organization is truly international. A little over half of our members come from Florida, but 32% come from the rest of the country (12% the midwest and west, 10% the south, and 10% new england). Five (5) percent of our

“2016 marks The Billfish Foundation's 30th anniversary so I'm pleased to have this opportunity to say 'thank you' for renewing your commitment to TBF's Tag & Release Program. Your generous contribution of \$2,500 helps ensure healthy billfish populations for future generations.”

Ellen M. Peel
President

“Thank you for all you do to help APROQUEN revolutionize burn, as well as cleft and lip palate care, in the Central American region. It is through individuals like you that we are able to continue to advance our mission and Turn Tears into Smiles...”

Evelyn Murillo, MPH
Development Director

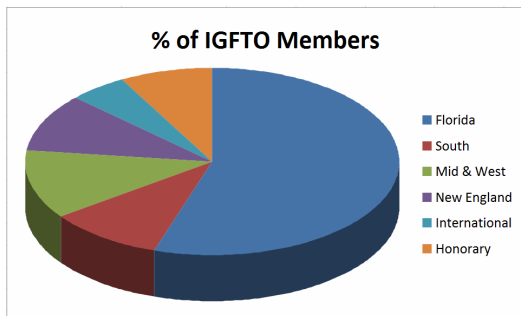
“Thanks to all IGFTO members. Your annual dues along with the much appreciated additional donations that so many of you made are what help IGFTO work. In addition to the business of managing observer participation in billfish release tournaments throughout the years, your generosity enables us to carry out our mission statement to support conservation and like organizations.”

Steve Hargett
President

Welcome New IGFTO members

We approved 22 new applicants for membership in 2016. IGFTO continues to grow and become more

members come from outside the United States.



**Membership Applications
are Available Online
at www.igfto.org.**

It's Official

The IGFTO received notification from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office that our trademark logo was officially registered as of February 21, 2017. Going forward we are required to include the letter "R" in a circle as part of our logo. IGFTO is registered under class 42: Inspecting tackle, fishing equipment, and fish to ensure compliance with tournament standards and the safe re-release of bill fish during catch and release tournaments. *We're official!*

IGFA Announces New Rule Changes

As of April 1, 2017 IGFA will institute the following rule changes:

influential in maintaining the high standards of the release tournaments in which we participate.

Welcome and congratulations to:

Nick Bellanca, Jr. Sebastian, FL
Ken Biro Hollywood, FL

Martin Cancun
Bracamonte- Quintana Roo,
Dominguez Mexico

Anna Bush Brookhaven, GA
Melinda Buckley Port St. Lucie, FL
Andrew Butler Mattapoisett, MA
Morace Chaney Plantation, FL
Barbara Evans Marco Island, FL
Alexander Fritz Vero Beach, FL
Greg Geltz Stuart, FL
Jeff Kittredge Port St. Lucie, FL
Sheri Lascell Palm City, FL
Skip Lascel Palm City, FL
Jeff Marsolais Pollock Pines, CA
Kevin McCarthy Chester, NJ
Andrew McLeod Temecula, CA
Rodney Nichol Florida City, FL
Ronald Pullman Tavernier, FL
Jason Renkes Tavernier, FL
Steve Roshon Stuart, FL
Michael Sampsel Stuart, FL
Markwrich Sorel Sarasota, FL

To new and all IGFTO members: It takes a lot of work to make the IGFTO work. If you have a talent or expertise that you think can help us to keep IGFTO as good as it can be please email any board member. Especially needed are volunteers to help us keep our new website up to

Assisting the angler: Current IGFA International Angling Rules state that "the act of a person other than the angler touching the rod, reel, or line either bodily or with a device once the fish strikes or takes the bait constitutes a disqualification." However, nowhere in the IGFA's rules do we discuss the legality of another person touching or making contact with the angler.

The following language will be added to section 3 of Disqualifying Acts: *"Holding or touching an angler in a manner that assists them in fighting the fish or takes pressure off the angler. Touching or briefly holding the angler to prevent them from falling does not constitute a disqualification"*.

Backing & Top-Shot: Current IGFA International Angling Rules state: *"If the fishing line is attached to backing, the catch shall be classified under the heavier of the lines."*

This rule has long been contested in cases where the main line or top shot is lighter than the underlying backing, as logic dictates that the lighter line will break before the heavier backing. This is also contrary to IGFA angling rules for fly fishing where the catch is categorized based on the breaking strength of the class tippet, which must be a minimum of 15 inches.

To address this issue, IGFA will be making alterations to Equipment Regulation A. The title will change from "LINE" to "LINE & BACKING".

date (we do not need programmers but rather people who can update tournament information carried on the site). Also needed are editor(s) and writer(s) for our newsletter. *Don't be shy. We need your help!*

We're here for you.

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Next Up

A new subsection will be added that reads: “3. *The use of backing is permissible.*”

A second new subsection will be added that reads: “4. *The catch shall be classified under the breaking strength of the first 16.5 feet (5 meters) of line directly preceding the double line, leader or hook. This section must be comprised of a single, homogenous piece of line.*”

Download your own 15-page copy of the revised angling rules by going to igfa.org, click on FISH, then click on International Angling Rules.

Hard to believe but calls for observers are already going out for fall 2017 tournaments:

June 8 : International Cap Cana Billfish Shootout

August 23 : Flor-de-Cana International Tournament

September 25 : San Juan International Billfish Tournament

October 19 : PCCA Aruba Caribbean Cup

November 8 : PCCA El Salvador International Billfish Tournament

Carrying on with the Mission IGFTO Speaks Up

New board member Art McDonald presented the IGFTO’s position regarding an application for an exempted fishing permit to conduct research in the northern portion of the East Florida Coast Pelagic Longline Closed Area. Here are excerpts from his letter to the NMFS:



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Margo Schulze-Haugen
Chief, Highly Migratory Species Division
National Marine Fisheries Service

The International Game Fish Tournament Observers (“IGFTO”) strongly opposes any approval by the National Marine Fisheries Service (“NMFS”) to allow 6

traditional longline boats to operate within the boundaries of Florida's East Coast – specifically, the East Coast Longline Closed Zone. This Zone was established to allow certain pelagic species (Swordfish) the ability to breed and mature, at the same time to avoid bycatch of other species not specifically targeted (Billfish, Tunas, Sea Turtles, Sharks). Longline gear represents a non-discriminatory “killing machine” of marine resources which greatly impacts both the recreational and commercial interests by depleting the stocks.

The IGFTO, by its very bi-laws, promotes conservation ethics toward the healthy release of all billfish species – including Swordfish. Since its inception in 2009, IGFTO has witnessed the release of over 33,000 billfish worldwide, and will not participate in any fishing tournament where a billfish can be killed. To allow ANY commercial longline gear off the coast of Florida is irresponsible, and violates the ethics and intentions of the Closed Zone enacted in 2001.

Very truly yours,

Art McDonald
Director

Thanks for speaking up in our behalf. Nice job Art.

International Game Fish Tournament Observers Inc. is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt charitable organization dedicated to the preservation and conservation of game fish worldwide. We provide trained and insured observers to authenticate the “catch and release” of billfish and game fish during international big game fish tournaments.

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