

## Press Release

La Paz, BCS México

November 29th, 2004

### SEA WATCH WITNESS TO OFFICIAL CEREMONY:

**Historical Trust Fund “FIDEICOMISO FONMAR” formed to collect and administer funds from the sale of fishing licenses: These funds will be used for vigilance and enforcement and will be overseen by the civil society.**

It was made official today by Baja California Sur State Governor Leonel Cota Montaño at the signing of documents with BBVA-Bancomer, which is the bank holding this trust.

Now, through an arrangement negotiated with the Federal Government of Mexico and the Baja California Sur State government (BCS), 100% of license fees collected by the “Fondo para la Protección de los Recursos Marinos” (Marine Protection Fund)<sup>i</sup> will be placed in a trust fund and will be used with direction and oversight of a “Comite Técnico” (Governing Board & Committees)<sup>ii</sup>. This committee presided by the BCS State Governor and which includes 13 members, 7 from the civil society and 6 from the various federal and state agencies.



**The Center for Marine Protection (Centro de Protección Marina)** will carry on the daily work and will provide the facts and instructions for the committees to make decisions.

**BCS Governor Leonel Cota Montaño and Secretary of Development, Ernesto Lopez Cinco of BCS were the driving force behind this historic agreement.**

This Center has been developed and funded by **Sea Watch, The Billfish Foundation (TBF), The Billfish Fund of Mexico** and others to deploy science, public education, citizen action and an increased marine enforcement presence to establish vital and timely protections for marine species and habitats in BCS.

**Sea Watch**, for the last three years has been devoting human and economic resources supporting the legal, technical, scientific and administrative work to establish this trust (FONMAR) and its correspondent **Center for Marine Protection**.

In a coordinated effort initially with Profepa (Mexican Attorney Generals Office of Marine Enforcement) and most recently with Conapesca (Mexican Fisheries Agency), the Navy, the Secretary of Tourism as well as with the BCS State Government; **Sea Watch** specifically has helped develop the concept of the Center’s main project which is the Guardianes del Mar Program (GUARDAMAR).

“Enforcement supervised by the Civil Society is the key ingredient needed to truly protect this unique ecosystem”. “This has been a long time desire and our ultimate goal and mission in Baja California and the Sea of Cortes” says, Mike McGettigan Founder of **Sea Watch**.

The only way to change things in Mexico's waters is to have a civil society controlled enforcement program". This is a new concept in Mexico and one of the few such programs in the world. We are proud of been able to help accomplish this long time conservation goal.

**Guardianes del Mar** eventually will also assist those navigating in these waters; check sport fishing licenses and identify fisheries problems and illegal activities in BCS. Guardianes del Mar will help coordinate and facilitate the efforts of Conapesca, Profepa, the Navy and State Government in addressing the fisheries problems through new and changed regulations and stopping illegal fishing practices.

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<sup>i</sup> No personnel will be hired by the Fideicomiso. So there would not be any employees and salaries paid for hired people. All these issues are extremely important because we want Mexico and other countries to know the funds are going 100% for conservation and specific programs. No program or conservation effort would be fully 100% financed by the fund. All would have to include "matching funds". In other words when there is a project or program submitted it will have to come with funding or we would have to shop together for funding from other sources of money since the funds from FONMAR will only match those which are brought for consideration

<sup>ii</sup> The Comité Técnico which is the Governing Board of the Fideicomiso includes Governor Leonel Cota Montana; Ernesto Lopez Cinco (Secretary of Development), Jose Borges Contreras (Secretary of Finances) and Maribel Collins (Tourism Office of BCS as well as representative of Federal Secretary of Tourism). Then there are the Federal Government representatives which are Sagarpa-Conapesca and Semarnat-Profepa. There is a County representative which is the Los Cabos Mayor Ulises Omar Ceseña Montaña. On the private sector: Alberto Coppel (Asociacion de Hoteles de Los Cabos); Enrique Fernandez del Castillo (Asociacion Mexicana de Marinas Turisticas A.C.); Luis Bulnes Molleda (Fundacion para la Conservacion de los Picudos A.C.); Minerva Saenz (Sindicato de Propietarios de Embarcaciones de Pesca Deportiva de los Cabos/Sportfisherman's Fleet Union of Los Cabos); Ing. Armando Covarrubias (CANACINTRA or Chamber of Industry Los Cabos); Alberto Coppola (Asociacion de Empresas Hoteleras y Turisticas de La Paz or EMPRHOTUR) and Carlos Van Wormer (Cabo del Este Pesca Deportiva A.C.).