



## **News Release**

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### **Take Marlin Off The Menu**

#### ***New Campaign Targets Chefs and Consumers in Fight to Help Endangered Marlin***

Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (November 12, 2008) – The next time you're in a restaurant and see marlin on the menu, "just say no." That's the message of a new, nationwide campaign to take marlin and other billfish off the menus of America's restaurants and out of seafood counters.

Marlin are one of the ocean's most magnificent fish, swimming free in the deep waters of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans. According to three major marine conservation organizations who have joined forces to "Take Marlin Off the Menu," billfish populations are being decimated by commercial overharvesting around the world.

By taking the "Take Marlin Off The Menu" campaign (<http://www.takemarlinoffthemenue.org>) to the stomachs of American consumers, The International Game Fish Association (IGFA), The Billfish Foundation (TBF), and the National Coalition for Marine Conservation (NCMC) are striving to reverse the demand for marlin meat and its import into the United States. The success of the campaign will take a bite out of commercial overfishing in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, which accounts for more than 90% of the annual marlin mortality.

"The goal of the "Take Marlin Off The Menu Campaign" is to persuade restaurants across the United States and Canada to take marlin off their menus for good," said Jason Schratwieser, director of conservation for the International Game Fish

Association (IGFA), an international recreational fishing organization founded in 1939 that is best known for maintaining freshwater and saltwater sportfishing records worldwide.

The “Take Marlin Off the Menu” campaign is being launched in response to the declining numbers of billfish, including blue, white, striped and black marlin and sailfish, which are found throughout the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. Billfish populations have plunged over the past several decades as a direct result of commercial tuna and swordfish fleets that catch marlin either through long-lining or through netting. On the other hand, according to the campaign’s sponsors, most sport fishermen now practice catch and release of marlin and other billfish, a conservation ethic in keeping with the catch and release of other freshwater and saltwater fish species throughout North America.

Marlin are top predators in the ocean, according to Ellen Peel, president of The Billfish Foundation, a Ft. Lauderdale-based non-profit exclusively dedicated to protecting billfish. Marlin are distinguished by a long bill, an extension of the upper jaw and nasal bone; brilliant colors when “lit up;” and sleek body shapes that allow them to swim at extraordinary speeds. They are highly migratory in nature and can travel great distances, such as crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Like lions, tigers, wolves and eagles, marlin and other billfish are an important, top-of-the-foodchain predator species that help keep marine ecosystems in balance.

“While there have been limited consumer campaigns in the past, there has never been more urgency than now,” said Ken Hinman, president of the National Coalition for Marine Conservation, a Leesburg, Va.-based group comprised of conservation-minded fishermen. “If we don’t stop the widespread consumption of billfish, these magnificent ocean predators will disappear from our seas. It’s simply that critical.”

The “Take the Marlin Off The Menu” campaign is taking aim at U.S. restaurants and grocery stores primarily because the U.S. is the world’s largest importer of billfish. That’s despite laws that currently make it illegal to commercially harvest marlin, sailfish and spearfish from the Atlantic Ocean.

According to a report commissioned by the IGFA, most marlin and other billfish in U.S. restaurants and grocery stores come from the Pacific Ocean. But because of lax standards in certifying that marlin bought and sold in the U.S. actually come from the Pacific, there’s really no way to know for sure where the fish originate, the group says.

The “Take Marlin Off The Menu Campaign” will use a three-prong strategy to reduce consumption of marlin. First, the campaign will attempt to persuade America’s most influential chefs and restaurant owners to stop serving marlin, while at the same time, offering up other, sustainable seafood options that consumers will find pleasing. Restaurants that pledge not to serve marlin will be promoted widely as

“marlin-free” on the <http://www.takemarlinoffthemenue.org> web site.

Second, the campaign will reach out to consumers to stop ordering marlin at their favorite restaurants, and to stop buying marlin at their local grocery store or seafood counter.

Third, the campaign will bring awareness of the harmful effects from eating marlin, which according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s health guidelines, contain unhealthy levels of mercury. Because marlin are large fish that mature over a longer period of time, they often contain much higher levels of mercury than other fish species.

All three non-profits contend there are many other fish species that are both more sustainable and healthier to eat. In the meantime, the best hope for marlin species is to “Take Marlin Off the Menu.”

For more information about the “Take Marlin Off the Menu” campaign, visit <http://www.takemarlinoffthemenue.org>.

## **IGFA**

The International Game Fish Association (IGFA), based in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., is a not-for-profit organization committed to the conservation of game fish and the promotion of responsible, ethical angling practices through science, education, rule making and record keeping. Founded in 1939, the IGFA is internationally known for maintaining and publishing world records for saltwater and freshwater catches, and for maintaining the world’s most comprehensive fishing hall of fame and museum.

## **The Billfish Foundation**

Based in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., The Billfish Foundation (TBF) is a science-based non-profit organization dedicated to conserving and enhancing billfish populations around the world through research, education advocacy. TBF’s comprehensive network of members and supporters includes anglers, captains, mates, tournament directors, clubs and sportfishing businesses. TBF networks these sportfishing interests around the world, providing expertise in science, socio-economics, education and fisheries policy, to find constructive solutions good for billfish and continued fishing opportunities.

## **National Coalition for Marine Conservation**

The National Coalition for Marine Conservation (NCCM), based in Leesburg, Va., was founded in 1973 by conservation-minded anglers and is dedicated exclusively to conserving ocean fish and their environment. NCCM works to prevent overfishing, reduce fish bycatch and protect habitat for a wide variety of ocean fish.

The group specializes in identifying problems and finding solutions; educating the public; developing proactive conservation strategies; and networking with like-minded fishing and environmental organizations.

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