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The International SeaKeepers Society and The Billfish Foundation take first steps in a joint effort to develop new methods for assessing fish health.

Bimini, Bahamas- May 20th 2015- The International SeaKeepers Society and The Billfish Foundation have taken the first steps in a joint effort to develop new methods for determining billfish health in collaboration with Dr. Duncan Irschick, a functional and evolutionary morphologist from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. While methods to measure billfish at sea already exist, these methods only involve measuring length to calculate weight. This new procedure will collect additional data, including girth of the fish and dorsal fin dimensions, to allow researchers to model each animal and assess overall health of the fish more robustly. By collecting these measurements from billfish living in different regions of the world, researchers will further be able to compare billfish health among populations.

A preliminary expedition involved two days of trolling for billfish in waters off of North Bimini aboard the 54-foot Hatteras, *Reel Buzz*. Representatives from The International SeaKeepers Society and The Billfish Foundation were onboard for the initial fishing expedition. The short expedition gave the researchers the ability to test several measuring and photographic methods on a number of fish species. Unfortunately, no billfish were caught and tagged during the trip.

SeaKeepers and The Billfish Foundation are planning future expeditions with Dr. Irschick to continue method development for a more valid computation for weight and health by creating a user-friendly device to take volumetric measurements quickly at sea. Eventually, this work will promote more catch and release practices in sport fishing and provide a better understanding of billfish population health.

This is not the first time Dr. Irschick has worked with The International SeaKeepers Society. He has also participated in the SeaKeepers 2014 shark tagging expeditions at Tiger Beach, Bahamas.

The Billfish Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to preserving global billfish populations by focusing on education and research, and advocacy for fisheries management. TBF's Tag and Release program, established in 1990, is one of their cornerstone programs, and is the largest private database of its kind. The data contributes to a further scientific understanding of billfish growth rates, habitat utilization, migratory patterns, post-release survival rates, and stock assessments. For more information about The Billfish Foundation, visit www.billfish.org.

About The International SeaKeepers Society®

The International SeaKeepers Society is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization focusing on the health of the world's oceans and climate. SeaKeepers works with the boating and yachting community to take advantage of their unique potential in order to further marine research and to raise awareness about the issues our oceans face. The International SeaKeepers Society acts as a global catalyst working with governments, scientists, industry, and other marine organizations to further its mission and to support sensible, achievable marine protection and restoration. For more information visit www.seakeepers.org.

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