

## Sea Watch Newsletter 2013

In 2009 Sea Watch partnered with Noroeste Sustentable (NOS) and several local NGO's to create an organization called Plataforma which had the goal of creating sustainable fisheries in the Bay of La Paz and surrounding area (70 miles of coastline). Sea Watch has always had the core belief that "fisheries can only recover if there are **clear regulations** designed to stop predatory fishing practices, there is **vigilance**, the **regulations are enforced** evenly and thus a **respect for them is developed** within the public and fishing communities".

To that end Sea Watch proposed and was the major funder of an organization called Observatorio Ciudadano (OC), Citizens Observers in English. Their mission was to interact with all fishermen during the day, listen to their ideas and complaints and to patrol at night, to catch,



New ROC Patrol Boat

report, and file a legal complaint against those found fishing illegally. Illegal night time pistoleros and daytime encerradores were taking about 20 tons of reef fish illegally each day. Within one year of OC operations, the illegal catch was reduced over 80% saving between 500 and 700 tons of reef fish yearly. [See Video...](#)

Starting in late 2012 and 2013 Sea Watch helped the OC program become independent and combined it with Waterkeepers Alliance to give it a more international stature and to get funding and support from a different but very similar and symbiotic funding base. The new entity is called Red de Observatorio Ciudadano (ROC), or Citizens Observer Network in English. This year Sea Watch also funded over \$15,000 to update, remodel and power ROC's new bigger and much safer night patrol boat. This boat is capable of carrying our captains, who are the best of the former illegal night time spear fishermen, as well as authorities, reporters, students, donors, etc. Their normal patrol is 2 days and 2 nights and they travel about 150 miles.

Also in 2013 Sea Watch Mexico AC was formed to give us a stronger Mexican voice and to create the Mexican equivalent to a 501(C)(3) corporation allowing a tax deduction for donations made by Mexicans.



**Maria Ugarte - Director Seawatch Mexico**

Since I am a director, it also allowed me to have a legal voice in Mexico without fear of legal repercussions. It will allow us to editorialize and confront head on in the newspaper and on Television the problems of officials not doing their jobs. Sea Watch Mexico as well as the new ROC organization are both run by Maria Ugarte, a lawyer with roots in La Paz, who now lives in Mexico City and has worked with us for the last 5 years.

NOS, a main partner in creating fishery sustainability within the Bay of La Paz has now had great success in creating alternatives for fishermen in the El Mangles community. This community was responsible for the majority of illegal fishing around La Paz. They were the first community to get licenses to use hookah gear for sea cucumbers and since they were underwater at night they were the first to discover the profitability of shooting sleeping reef fish. Sea Watch's success with stopping illegal fishing, along with the very successful program of NOS working with the fishermen to set common goals and to change their community vision from one of fighting to kill an ever decreasing number of reef fish to survive, to a community wide vision of bringing back the clams and scallops in the bay of La Paz to pre 1960 levels has been very successful. The fishermen have designed and built rearing pens, strategically located them, cleaned the bay and have now built a reserve of clams and scallops in the bay that will return over 50,000,000 pesos to the previously destitute fishermen over the next 5 years and will provide the ~ 100 families with a sustainable income. Equally important they are now stewards of the sea. We now provide vigilance for the same people we were trying to get arrested 4 years ago. For those interested, please read and watch [this short video presentation](#) There was a long complicated learning curve but now this program of finding alternatives for displaced fishermen is on course to be a huge and replicable success.

Even though I'm the eternal skeptic, I now truly believe real and permanent change is possible. The success of El Manglito and the decrease in illegal fishing demonstrates this. But it requires support from people like you who truly care about the sea. Your support will echo for many generations to come as we replicate this success in other areas of the Sea of Cortes. We thank you for doing what you can to help.

**Mike McGettigan - Founder**