

COVID-19 and Marco Sportfishing Club

February 06, 2021

Submitted



Submitted Photos | 2019 Leaderboard Winners (largest fish of a species caught in 2019) at the last MSC meeting prior to Covid-19 closings.

2020 was a difficult year for just about everyone. We all tried to cope, as best as we could, to follow the CDC guidelines along with the regulations from the state and local government. While piling in comparison to how the virus effected businesses and the service industry, it did create issues for all of Marco's social organizations.

The Marco Sportfishing Club (MSC) is just one of many such organizations which has had to adapt to an ever-changing landscape challenging how we provide services for our membership. With over 400 members, MSC prepared to weather the storm and find ways to keep our members engaged while striving to keep them safe.

The main thrust of our club is fishing the waters around Marco Island, the 10,000 Islands, and the Gulf of Mexico. However, a major benefit for club membership is the interaction with other like-minded fishing enthusiasts and their families. We provide a balance of social and fishing activities to make the club fun for all. Living in one of the nation's best fishing locations many of the residents of, and visitors to, Marco Island enjoy an active lifestyle that includes being on the water and the excitement of landing prized sportfish. Sharing these successful adventures at social events and offering tips to other



members just adds to the fun. Novice anglers find the social activities to be a treasure trove of fishing knowledge shared by those with more experience fishing these waters.

Covid-19 abruptly put an end to the social aspects of the club in early 2020. We cancelled our face-to-face meetings as venues were no longer permitted to hold indoor gatherings. Outdoor venues were also closed, and masks and social distancing became the norm. But we did have one thing going for us – fishing. Both the FWC and Governor DeSantis released guidelines for boating that allowed us to be out on the water and participate in the fishing events we had planned. However, even that silver lining had limitations, for any of the events normally include multiple anglers on each vessel. Social distancing becomes rather difficult on a small backwater craft. Fishing with others became – fishing by yourself.

The social aspects of the events were also cancelled. Captains' Meetings, where rules for events are traditionally explained and competing teams plan their strategy, could not be held. Celebration or awards events were not possible. Prizes normally presented at meetings had to be mailed or left at doorsteps. Part of the fun of winning an event is being called up to receive your award in front of those you competed against.

Club newsletters, emails and eventually, virtual meetings, helped keep the members informed. As with other groups on the island, these virtual meetings have been difficult for some members due to the computer skills required. The fun and camaraderie of a meeting just does not translate to a computer or smartphone screen.

We continue to be blessed with the ability to get out on the water and fish. Virtual meetings may give way to outdoor meeting venues where we can maintain social distancing. Captains' meetings and awards events, though scaled back, are possible. Vaccines are being distributed and we are looking forward to the time when we can share fishing with more members and once again enjoy picnics and other family-oriented, land-based activities.

To learn more about the Marco Sportfishing Club, please visit our website www.marcosportfishingclub.com.