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# Trip Report, Reconnaissance to the Gulf of California, October 22 – November 18, 1998

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This five year project aims to conserve critical coastal resources in Mexico by building capacity of NGOs, Universities, communities and other key public and private stakeholders to promote an integrated approach to participatory coastal management and enhanced decision-making. This publication was made possible through support provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Environment and Natural Resources Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade under the terms of Cooperative Agreement No. PCE-A-00-95-0030-05.



**Overarching Observations of the ICM Context  
in the Gulf of California**

CRC Reconnaissance Trip- November 98

- The Gulf of California has a wealth of trained, experienced professionals working on various aspects of coastal management.
- Many decisions are driven by outside forces.
- The traditional approach for management planning is to develop a plan from the top down as opposed to the bottom up.
- There are several opportunities to demonstrate a community-based, participatory ICM process that would support “integrated” coastal management.
- There is an opportunity to exchange experiences between QR and GOC.
- Parks and reserves are an important component of an ICM strategy in the Gulf, however, resources are limited at this time, thereby affecting their management abilities.
- There is a window of opportunity at the federal level within the next 18 months to change policy to promote ICM.
- Ongoing regional activities, as well as specific local activities, can provide a basis for designing an ICM strategy for the region and/or the nation.

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**Overarching Observations of the ICM Context  
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*The Gulf of California has a wealth of trained, experienced professionals working on various aspects of coastal management.* There is an impressive group of professionals working at the NGO level, within the federal government, and within University institutions that provide a strong foundation of knowledge for ICM efforts. There are 8 people in the region who have been directly trained by CRC in summer institutes or in the Ecuador 2-week course. Additionally, there are many people with master's degrees from local institutions in resource management as well as a group of professionals with advanced degrees from Dalhousie, Delaware, Oregon, and Arizona. It would be useful to work with these folks to support their ongoing ICM initiatives, and to identify key actions that would promote effective ICM governance and implementation at local, regional, and national levels.

*Many decisions are driven by outside forces.* For example, many of the Upper Gulf issues stem from water problems (i.e. from the Colorado River), which are driven by decisions in the US. Wastewater/drainage input to the Gulf (where watersheds may reach as far away as Mexico City) is driven by the classic upstream/inland decision-makers using river water and discharging wastewater. Most decisions for permits and resource allocation of the sea (and the 20 meter strip above MHW), is determined by Federal decision makers, in Mexico City, with little or no consultation with local players. Additionally, all of the protected areas are managed by Federal officials, with timelines for completing management plans governed by the Fondo Mexicano, a GEF-funded grant program, which has given their own deadlines for management plan development and implementation.

*The traditional approach for management planning is to develop a plan from the top down as opposed to the bottom up.* While many innovative planning efforts are ongoing, it appears as though they follow a hypothesis driven by the "top down" approach. Plan development is initiated by the collection of good information at the institutional level (i.e. universities using GIS and scientific studies), followed by the local meetings to present the information and to inform the local people of the findings. While this approach includes many essential elements (information gathering, consultation, and workshop input), the order of task execution does not fully promote a participatory approach (throughout the entire process) nor does it promote issue driven analysis (where there is a consensus of issues derived from local input from project initiation).

*There are several opportunities to demonstrate a community-based, participatory ICM process that would support "integrated" coastal management.* Various initiatives in resource management are ongoing and are at different phases. Overall, there is a need to identify lessons learned (good and bad) and supplement the local examples with other initiatives from Mexico and other Latin America countries which can provide input to the development of new management initiatives in the region. In the Loreto Marine Park (Baja California Sur), government staff are in the process of drafting a plan (with input from the University). This is the only protected area that includes the islands and the surrounding water bodies; the other reserves either include the coastal waters or the terrestrial part of the island. The Park managers and the NGOs (i.e. ISLA) are interested in working with the local fishing communities to encourage ownership and collaboration (however, time and money is limited). In the Upper Gulf Reserve, management initiatives are being implemented by federal, state and NGO stakeholders. The Reserve's technical advisory committee provides a good example of a tool for participatory management. The plans being initiated in Santa Maria (Estuary management in Southern Sinaloa) and in Puerto Penasco (municipal tourism development in Sonora) have plans to involve community, institution, government and private sectors in their initiatives. The management plan for Espirito Santo Island (Baja

California Sur) has been initiated; this collaboration of the University (CICIMAR), Reserve, and ISLA (NGO) is interested initiating an integrated plan based on participatory management of ICM which can be used as a model process/document for the other island resources (more than 900 islands in total) within the Reserve.

*There is an opportunity to exchange experiences between QR and GOC.* Experience in marine park management in Quintana Roo (i.e. Cozumel or Isla Contoy) can be useful for the Gulf. Additionally, the QR experience (albeit limited and not totally tested) of developing OET to support ICM could be valuable. Additionally, the examples of Guaymas and BCS role of the institutions in coastal management in the GOC (both through curriculum and investigation/extension), could be useful in QR. The Xcalak experience of local community visioning and input to management, would be extremely useful in GOC, as would the application of the normas practicas for tourism in various management initiatives. Exchange amongst Mexicans within the region and between the regions would be a positive step towards enhancing local knowledge and using the existing successes within country to feed new management initiatives.

*Parks and reserves are an important component of an ICM strategy in the Gulf, however, resources are limited at this time, thereby affecting their management abilities.* While the Islands Reserve (approximately 922 islands) was designated by the national government 20 years ago, staff has only been onsite for the past 3 years. Staff is limited to 20, separated into 4 locations. Operational funds are being provided by federal government, with the aid of GEF trust monies and in some cases, with international grant monies funneled through NGOs. There are no existing management plans, however, Loreto Park and Espirito Santu Island are in the process of developing plans that will be looked on as models. Additionally, reserve staff is looking towards re-evaluating islands to determine the most appropriate MPA status – however, funds are so limited that the characteristics/issues are not known about all locations. Additionally, one the Loreto example addresses both island and surrounding water issues, whereas other reserves are either land or water-based.

*There is a window of opportunity at the federal level within the next 18 months to change policy to promote ICM.* The federal government has initiated a regional study on the role of a marine ordinance and the potential for integrated management. Activities are ongoing to address this issue, and there is a group of NGO/University/Government stakeholders who feel that during this time, a proposal must be made to the federal government, resulting in the establishment of a policy framework, that could be carried into the next administration.

*Ongoing regional activities, as well as specific local activities, can provide a basis for designing an ICM strategy for the region and/or the nation.* There are many examples of coastal management which demonstrate various aspects of governance at different levels, and different types of ICM strategies. Most of these activities need support (financial and technical) to better see the anticipated results. Additionally, the learning experience would be greatly increased if there was a way to evaluate the existing programs, document lessons learned, and provide exchange amongst site based activities. These models could then feed into designing local/regional/national governance frameworks.