



Trip Report, Reconnaissance to the Gulf, 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.



Trip Report
Pam Rubinoff, Don Robadue, Emilio Ochoa
Conservation of Critical Coastal Ecosystems in Mexico
October 22 – November 18, 1998

GOAL/PURPOSE:

The purpose of this trip was to:

1. Participate in a reconnaissance to the Gulf (EO, DR, PR)
2. Participate in NGO/Civic Associations Workshop in the Gulf (EO, DR, PR)
3. Identify opportunities for future activities in the Gulf of California(EO, DR, PR)
4. Participate in Meso American Reef Initiative Meeting in Cancun (PR)
5. Take Spanish Lessons (PR)
6. Follow up on administrative activities in Quintana Roo (PR)

Outputs:

1. Observations of the Gulf of California
2. Preliminary strategy for FY 99 activities in the Gulf of California
3. Transition strategy for ASK

Gulf of California

The reconnaissance trip included both a tour of sites/programs and participation in a workshop of NGO/Civic Associations. The goal of the visit was to better understand the region, its people and players, the resource management issues and the ongoing coastal management initiatives so that CRC could begin to define its USAID/Mexico strategy. The CRC team included Pam Rubinoff, Don Robadue, and Emilio Ochoa. For the first phase on the peninsula (La Paz and Loreto), the team was accompanied by Antonio Cantu, and Maria Elena Martínez (Conservación de Territorio Insular Mexicano, A.C. - ISLA). For the second phase on the continental side of the Gulf (Sta Maria, Bahia Kino, Upper Gulf Reserve, Guaymas) Maria Angeles Carvajal, (Conservation International - CI) and Jane Marks (USAID/Mexico) joined the CRC team. The workshop organized by the region's NGO/Civic Associations was attended by Don and Pam, as well as Jane Marks and the staff from ISLA, CI, and over 20 other Civic Associations. Prior to this team effort, Pam took 5 days of Spanish lessons, progressing another step in an effort to communicate more effectively in both written and spoken language.

Overall Observations

There were several observations that the team made, which will be useful in defining and implementing ICM initiatives in the region. See Annex 1 for more detailed information regarding these observations.

- The Gulf of California has a wealth of trained, experienced professionals working on various aspects of coastal management.
- Many management 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 participatory, community-based ICM and special area management planning, which 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.

Needs of the Gulf Region

The field trip and meeting of civic associations revealed a wide range of conservation and coastal management initiatives underway:

- island protected areas (938 identified sites),
- marine parks (Alta Golfo Reserve, Loreto Marine Park), and
- numerous areas of critical concern with no special management designation.

To some degree these efforts are operating in isolation from each other, although both Conservation International and ISLA maintain relationships with a considerable number of these efforts.

The overall impression is that advances are being made in different sites related to the challenges encountered in site based management, and that there is a great need to share these approaches and ideas across the sites. For example, the Loreto National Marine Park is facing challenges in assuring the inclusion of four fishing communities in plan decisions, while the Upper Gulf Biosphere Reserve (both in Santa Clara and Puerto Peñasco) showed strong achievements. In this Reserve there is a functioning technical advisory council and a profile of fisheries characteristics, practices and policies, that was developed in close collaboration of the fishers of the region. The need for concrete management examples and exchange of lessons-learned, was confirmed by the civic associations, who set this as one of their four core elements required in the next few years.

According to information collected by Conservation International from the civic association meeting, and reaffirmed during the event, the majority of groups are working primarily on public awareness and education, and have relatively little experience in conducting site based projects and programs. Universities are playing an important role in the preparation of island, reserve, and marine park plans. For example, the management plan for the Upper Gulf Reserve was prepared by a consortium of universities and civic associations; the Loreto National Marine Park plan draft was developed by the University of Baja California Sur; and the plan for Isla Espiritu Santo is under preparation by CICIMAR in La Paz, a graduate training and marine research institution. Additionally, the preparation of the Ordenamiento Ecologico Marino for the entire Gulf is being developed by an inter-institutional group that includes Technological Institute of Monterrey (ITESM) in Guaymas and University of Mexico's (UNAM) field station in Mazatlán, among many other government units and civic associations.

The positive achievements in the Gulf are taking place within the overwhelming context of the large region and the Mexican legal framework. The Gulf Islands Reserve encompasses more than 900 islands, many of which are not mapped in detail or named, yet the National Ecology Institute is attempting to make a first version management plan to cover the entire system before the end of this year to meet deadlines set by the Global Environmental Facility. The Loreto and Espiritu Santu draft plans are among the few detailed documents in preparation within this extensive system. Loreto is the only island system within the Gulf Islands Reserve which has a marine component (since there is an adjacent Marine National Park). In all other instances, managers can plan/implement programs for conservation and use of the islands, but not their surrounding waters. Although the Gulf Islands Reserve was created in 1978, local staffing for management has only been recently initiated (around 1995). Only about 20 staff,

divided into four sub-regions roughly corresponding to the four main Gulf states, are assigned full time to operate the Reserve. As few operational and material resources are provided to these teams, civic associations are moving to fill the void. In the case of two major areas - Loreto and Espiritu Santo – vehicles, equipment and even enforcement officers for PROFEPA, will be provided through ISLA, a civic association with an office in La Paz. These efforts are being assisted by programs such as the USAID/Mexico Parks in Peril Program (collaboration with TNC) and the Japanese assistance program.

A Common Agenda for the Environmental Civic Associations in the Gulf Region

The trip concluded with a two-day meeting of over 20 Civic Associations engaged in conservation in the Gulf region. This first meeting of its kind in the region yielded a consensus on the need to pursue the preparation of a detailed common agenda in four key areas of work of concern to the environmental community. The participants agreed to meet as small committees to develop specific ideas on how each of these broad areas of concern could be addressed. The key areas of future work include:

1. **Define the vision of the bio-geographic region** which is to be the focus of the groups; once defined, document its ecological importance, the economic impact of uses, and the cultural dimensions of the region which influence its management. Specific proposed activities included a detailed survey of active groups, a shared data base of available information about resources, and public awareness actions such as a region-wide campaign, environmental education, a calendar of the cycle of the regional ecosystem, brochures and newsletters.
2. **Compile and share information about management experiences** by the groups in the bio-region. The purposes included: identify common themes in work, compare information, build a common language, avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, learn from successes and failures, expand awareness of these management initiatives, and discover how to sustain financial support. One useful tool would be to prepare “diagnoses” or cases which describe an initiative, its social context, origin, objectives, background, methods, resources, results, problems and successes.
3. **Institutional strengthening** of civil associations, along the lines of TNC’s work with site conservation groups, on topics including: sources of financing, legal requirements and administration, training of staff including leadership, networks and alliances, and program development.
4. **Development of a common conceptual framework**, beginning with a historical review of key ideas, examination of the political and social context, and the links among core ideas, all through a series of meetings. Key concepts which need to be clarified within the bio-regional context include: development, environment, conservation, quality of life, progress, sustainability, economic growth, scientific and environmental education, information, research, empirical and traditional knowledge, science, equity, gender, and participation.

Ongoing Coastal Management Efforts of USAID Partners

During the trip, the team visited 6 sites where ISLA and CI are currently working. The issues and the management responses are summarized in Figure 1. ISLA is currently working with several partners, including TNC on Parks in Peril, the Island Reserve and the CICIMAR University to facilitate management efforts of Espiritu Santo Island and the islands/waters in Loreto. Additionally, ISLA has initiated efforts to promote a state government awareness for conservation and management. Conservation International, works with over 20 associates (university, NGO, and government), in many aspects of coastal management.

In effort to look at all of their programs within a coastal management framework (per request of USAID Mexico), CI developed a program for its own three year work program to carry out the following major tasks:

- 1.1.1 Biodiversity conservation **priority setting** (similar to 1 above)
- 1.2.1 Development of **low impact shrimp fishery** technology
- 1.2.2 Sustainable **economic alternatives** for the Upper Gulf Biosphere Reserve
- 1.3.1 **Governance mechanisms**, lobbying and promoting support for regional integrated coastal management, and legal reforms
- 1.3.2 **Co-management of fisheries** in the Gulf of California, through functional management units in Upper Gulf, Kino Bay, Santa Maria Bay, and La Paz Bay.
- 1.3.3 **Conservation of the wetlands** of Santa Maria Bay
- 1.4.1 **Awareness campaign** for the conservation of the Gulf of California
- 1.4.2 **Program Development** for Conservation International (similar to the needs identified by all the civic associations in theme 3.)

Role of CRC's USAID/Mexico Program in the Gulf of California

There are numerous ongoing activities which contribute to a coastal management framework for the region. Over the next half year, as the players in the region better define their issues and their agendas, the USAID project can be designed in collaboration with local partners to compliment ongoing efforts in support of the region's vision. Proposed FY '99 activities summarized below are intended to initiate the five year USAID/Mexico ICM program (as detailed in the 5 year proposal and project framework). A more detailed draft strategy can be seen in Annex 2. Each of the activities identified enhances ongoing initiatives in the region, and supports a model for input to future regional ICM and governance options (i.e. Special Area Management Planning, Community-based Management, Field-based training). These activities will help the team better understand the issues and the players in the Gulf, thereby providing a foundation to design the Life of Project Strategy. The CRC team will work with partners over the next month to get feedback on this strategy with the goal of developing a detailed workplan, timeline, and budget for the next 9 months. In addition to activities proposed below, CRC will work with USAID/Mexico and Gulf of California partners to develop the Life of Project Strategy, targets/indicators, and the FY2000 workplan by September 1999.

IR 1.1 Community-based site management is established in protected areas and critical ecosystems

- Provide support to ongoing ICM activities in Santa Maria Bay, to introduce tools and techniques from Mexican and other regional experiences which compliment the issues and management initiatives.

1. Support Conservation International and its partners in development of their program for the Bahia de Santa Maria initiative. This lagoon-wetland complex in the central coast of Sinaloa state has been targeted for special-area management plan-like activities by Conservation International to promote ICM. The pertinent issues cross jurisdictions and affects social, environmental, and economic strategies of the area. This bay contains one of the largest artisanal fishing ports, the site for the construction of about 5000 ha of shrimp ponds, intensive coastal agriculture, coastal land tenancy concerns, dredging of channels, large mangrove wetlands identified as one of the most important sites in the Gulf area for migratory birds, and extensive privately owned barrier beaches. CRC support could include assisting the CI team in defining products (and providing appropriate examples) such as issue profiles, community statements, participatory planning process. Additionally, the CRC team could provide input, as appropriate, on the options, roles, and responsibilities for the Technical Advisory Committee to be created to oversee the planning initiative.

2. *Plan and implement a workshop on coastal management tools/techniques and regional experience exchange, with emphasis on the case of Santa Maria Bay.* Drawing upon the model of the 1997 Quintana Roo workshop on integrated coastal management, collaborate with Conservation International and its lead local partner, the University of Mexico/Sinaloa-Mazatlan, to organize and implement a two-three day event. Within the context of the ongoing project in Santa Maria Bay, the workshop would provide the project team, invited government officials, and members of the environmental civic associations, with an introduction to coastal management concepts/techniques, and case study experiences (from the Gulf of California, Quintana Roo and Latin America) for them to draw upon as they develop planning and participatory structures/processes.

3. *Potential long-term follow-up* includes technical assistance to support models for issue profiling, participatory and integration mechanisms, or special area plan preparation. This area may provide an opportunity to transfer/test the General Management Practices for Shrimp Mariculture, being developed by CRC and USAID partners in Central America.

IR 1.3 Improved policies for conservation and sustainable use are incorporated into marine park and coastal environmental plans, and improved conditions for implementing these policies are created in Quintana Roo and the Gulf of California.

- Support the Regional approach to addressing Gulf of California governance issues, and assist in assessing local/regional capacity for integrated coastal resources management in the states surrounding the Gulf of California.

1. *Review and assist in the design of Conservation International Task 1.3.1 “Regional Sustainable Development / Integrated Coastal Management: Governance Mechanisms for the Gulf of California”.* Concurrent with the Federal initiative for regional management of the marine waters of the Gulf, the project proposes to support CI in defining their governance initiative. This is a critical component for addressing the overarching goal of improving the framework for conservation and coastal management in the Gulf region. This governance initiative could be a target for expanded USAID/Mexico support as a vehicle to promote regional ICM.

2. *Participate in a meeting of influential regional thinkers on defining governance challenges and policy steps needed to enable integrated coastal management to be carried out in areas under federal and state jurisdiction.* Integral to the process of preparing the Ordenamiento Ecologico Marino, Conservation International is in a good position to bring together leading intellectual leaders in the region to discuss essential steps which the federal government needs to take to make the current legal framework more effective. As discussed by Alejandro Robles in a meeting this past August, CRC can play a role by bringing international experience to this discussion, and assist CI and other players in defining the role of governance in ICM.

3. *Potential long-term follow-up activities* – A capacity assessment exercise aimed at the states within the Gulf of California would provide input to addressing the challenges involved within the existing framework of sectoral planning and implementation.

IR 1.4 Improved NGO and professional capacity enables site management plans, best practices, in addition to improved policies to be implemented, replicated, and sustained in Quintana Roo and the Gulf of California.

- Support the development of a model management plan, which incorporates elements of community-based ICM that can be used in other sites throughout the Gulf.

1. Implement a workshop on Coastal Management tools/ and regional experience exchange in Loreto-La Paz region, with emphasis on the case of Loreto Marine and Island Reserve and adjoining coastal communities. Work with ISLA to design and implement a two day experience-exchange event related to community-based management and participation in integrated coastal management, aimed more at bringing Mexican and Latin American experience to the region. The event would serve to enable active civic associations and universities meet and work together on key issues facing the planning and implementation of the reserves and adjacent urban and fishing communities in this region.

2. Potential long-term follow-up activities includes longer period training event to serve as a way to transfer lessons learned for core field work experiences in the Gulf; preparation of a proposal for special area management type project in the Bahia de La Paz region to unify the management of island, water area and shore issues; and technical assistance to local civic associations/marine park staff to foster community-based development strategies for fishing communities adjacent (i.e. drawing on the Xcalak experience and methodology).

Quintana Roo

Meso American Reef Initiative

CRC (PR), ASK, and UQROO participated in a one-day workshop on the Meso American Reef Initiative. The goal of the workshop was to provide input to ongoing initiatives that will support the Initiative. The World Bank, in collaboration with SEMARNAP, are currently writing the Terms of Reference to initiate the grant for Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. The grant will be \$10 million, divided by the 4 countries over 5 years. In addition to technical information provided, the project team encouraged the World Bank and SEMARNAP to strategically coordinate efforts between the 2 grants (that will concurrently address both the land and marine segments of the Global Environmental Facility programs) to help insure that management issues were truly integrated. Additionally, the team felt strongly that existing ICM models be used for lessons-learned; as such, the USAID/Mexico project's activities has some concrete examples/models to contribute to the initiative for replication.

Administrative Issues

CRC and ASK discussed the implementation of the work plan in light of recent changes in staffing, where 2 members of the ASK team have left the organization. While the majority of activities will be implemented in a similar fashion by the new ASK/CRC team, the timeline will be delayed, due to the transition of staff and hiring of new staff. As such, the ASK contract was extended (no-cost extension) until December 31, 1999 to accommodate for the transition. It appears as though many of the Xcalak activities are already in action and will continue with the existing staff. However, activities regarding promotion of the low impact tourism activities will be delayed for a short period of time, and supported by short term contracts/collaborations outside of ASK, in addition to the potential leadership of the ASK Board of Directors. CRC will support ASK by working closely with new staff to building capacity for the ICM project. The ASK team has advertised the positions and will consult with CRC on final selection of staff. It is anticipated that the new team will be in place by the beginning of January 1999.

Follow-up Activities

FY '99 Strategy Review (ISLA, CI, USAID)

FY '99 Workplan (Pam, team)

ICM information exchange as noted on trip (Don, Pam)

Incorporate contacts into CRC database (Kathy)

Annexes:

Annex 1 Observations of the team

Annex 2 Draft FY '99 Strategy

Figure 1 Reconnaissance Trip: site management issues and response

cc: ASK (J. Di Donna, C. Lopez), UQROO (N. Armijo), USAID/Mexico (J. Marks, F. Zadroga), USAID/GEV(M. Philley, R. Volk, B. Best, E. Fajer), CI (M. Angeles, A. Robles), ISLA (M. Martinez, A. Cantu), CRC (Emilio, Don, Lynne, Jen, Maria, Stephen, Kathy, Patty).

5. ALTO GULF BIOSPHERE RESERVE	
Fisheries (art/com), fresh H2O flow, tourism/ community develop	Com-based Mgmt
reserve (core/buffer zones), fisheries mgmt, ecotourism "exercise". model committee	SAMP

LOCATION	
issues	ICM context
Management response	

4. BAHIA KINO	
Fisheries user conflicts, indig. comm, terrestrial biodiversity, tourism/ com devel, wet/lagoon	Wetlands/ Estuary Mgmt
Reg. Island Reserve (w/o management plan), self enforcement by Seri Indians, fish co-mgmt	Com-based Mgmt SAMP

6. GUAYMAS	
Fisheries, industry, pollution, tourism/com devel	Bay Mgmt
Mariculture pilot, NGO hub	SAMP/ NEP

1. LA PAZ – 2. LORETO	
Site convs	Fisheries (art), Ejido land rights, biodiversitv. tourism
Com-based Mgmt/MPA	Reg. island reserve & marine park (plans in progress), Parks in Peril, self-mgmt by ecotourism operators
Bay Mgmt	

3. SANTA MARIA	
Fisheries, shrimp mariculture, heavy aariculture. wetlands	Bay/ lagoon Mgmt
Participatory ICM, wetlands conserv. maricult. extension	SAMP/ NEP

