

IMPLEMENTING THE
GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION
IN NORTH AMERICA
LESSONS LEARNED FROM TWO PILOT
PROJECTS

*A report on progress in implementing the Global Programme of Action
in the Gulf of Maine and the Bight of the Californias*

PREPARED BY

THE GULF OF MAINE PILOT PROJECT



THE BIGHT OF THE CALIFORNIAS PILOT PROJECT



This Report was prepared for the Secretariat of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), through a partnership with the Global Programme of Action Coalition of the Gulf of Maine and the Bight of the Californias Ad Hoc Committee. The views contained herein do not necessarily reflect those of the CEC, nor the governments of Canada, Mexico, or the United States of America.

Reproduction of this document in whole or in part, and in any form for educational or nonprofit purposes, may be made without special permission from the CEC Secretariat, provided acknowledgment of the source is made. The CEC would appreciate receiving a copy of any publication or material that uses this document as a source.

For more information, contact:

Commission for Environmental Cooperation

Hans Herrmann
Head of Conservation of Biodiversity Program
393, rue St-Jacques Ouest, bureau 200
Montréal (Québec) Canada H2Y 1N9
Tel: (514) 350-4300 Fax: (514) 350-4314
E-mail: hherrman@cceemtl.org
Internet: <http://www.cec.org>

For more information about the Pilot Projects, contact:

The Global Programme of Action Coalition for the Gulf of Maine (GPAC)

Colleen Mercer Clarke, GPAC Coordinator
CBCL Limited
1489 Hollis Street, P.O. Box 606,
Halifax (Nova Scotia) Canada, B3J 2R7
Tel: (902) 492-6761 Fax (902) 423-3938
E-mail: colleenc@cbcl.ca

The Bight of the Californias Ad Hoc Committee

Mike McLaughlin
Co-Chair, United States of America
Director, Land Use and Public Facilities Planning
SANDAG
401 B Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101
Tel: (619) 595-5373 Fax: (619) 595-5305

Adolfo González Calvillo,
Co-Chair, Mexico
Director General de Ecología
Gobierno del Estado de Baja California
Centro de Gobierno, Vía Oriente No. 1
Zona del Río, Tijuana, BC México
Tel: (52 66) 24-20-95 Fax: (52 66) 24-20-96

Executive Summary and Recommendations

International protocols on environmental management provide an important tool to guide nations in their efforts to advance the principles of sustainable development. Effective implementation of these protocols often requires significant change to existing mechanisms of both governance and business. Implementation of the United Nations Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land Based Activities (GPA) can be further challenged when the receiving marine environment is bounded by the shores of two or more nations.

For the past three years, a unique partnering of individuals from community organizations, business and industry, research, government, and First Nations and Native Americans, has been working to implement the principles of the GPA in the shared watersheds of the Bight of the Californias (located on the Pacific coasts of Mexico and the United States) and the Gulf of Maine (located on the Atlantic coasts of Canada and the United States). Nearly a thousand persons from these regions have assisted the Commission for Environmental Cooperation in the development of two of the first GPA implementation programs in the world.

The development of these two multi-sectoral partnership organizations has faced difficulties arising from differing rules of governance, organizational structures, and political and non-political agendas. Sharing of data, communication of issues, and consensus building, exacerbated by physical and cultural separation, required significant fiscal and human resources, including the development and implementation of electronic communication tools.

Conservatively estimated, every dollar of CEC funding has leveraged over four dollars in financial and/or in kind services from the GPA project members and other sources. Despite the impressive progress achieved by each of the regional GPA implementation organizations, their future remains in question. Financial support from the CEC, part of which has been applied to critical coordination and organizational activities will cease in 2000. Available sources of private sector funding are focused towards support for specific projects. Sources of government funding generally do not permit application to core support. Opportunities for regional institutionalization of these efforts do exist, but are in the preliminary stages and will require additional time to consolidate. Without core organizational support continued in the near term, it is unlikely that either organization will survive.

The lessons learned from the experiences of the two pilot projects reflect their shared principles, vision and conclusions, and exemplify the differences in their approaches to sectoral partnership building. Members of the Gulf of Maine and Californias projects have phrased these lessons learned as recommendations for positive actions. They are intended to assist the CEC with its program development and in the implementation of other endeavours such as these, and in the conservation of biodiversity throughout North America.

The following recommendations are supported by the majority but cannot be viewed as fully representing the differing viewpoints of all participants in the pilot projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSION

- Increase the time frame for fiscal and human support of cooperative initiatives from the existing standard of two to three years, recognizing that the construction of productive relationships leading to meaningful change represents a long term commitment by all participants to the process.
- Use the established partnerships and initiatives in the Gulf of Maine and the Bight of the Californias as a foundation for new initiatives in the conservation of biodiversity.
- Improve communication and integration of the findings, conclusions and recommendations among the biodiversity programs of the CEC.
- Share the experience gained in the North American Pilot Projects with other existing and proposed initiatives in support of the conservation of biodiversity, locally, nationally and globally.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON GPA IMPLEMENTATION

- Overcome obstacles to international cooperation exacerbated by differences in language, culture and the foundations and practices of governance through continued support for bi-national, multi- sectoral partnerships and cooperative ventures.
- Invest greater resources in applied ecosystem research on the effects of persistent pollutants and nutrients, and the physical loss of habitat and populations.
- Examine existing legal instruments, and other measures for environmental protection and enforcement, against their capability to ensure the health and sustainability of habitats and ecosystems, not just species and populations.
- Improve multi-sectoral participation at all biodiversity management levels, with special reference to First Nations and Native American Tribes.
- Identify existing government legal instruments and support programs that act in conflict with goals for the protection and conservation of biodiversity.
- Harmonize protection and conservation instruments and programs between nations, and other jurisdictions that share regional seas.
- Improve mechanisms for data collection, storage, and sharing.
- Enhance instruments and opportunities for public education on marine and coastal habitats and for the communication of biodiversity values.

Table Of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

United Nations Global Programme of Action	1
Guiding Principles of the GPA	2
Commission for Environmental Cooperation.....	4

GULF OF MAINE PILOT PROJECT

GPAC Organization.....	6
Guiding Principles	7
Progress to Date	7
Lessons Learned.....	8
Effectiveness of the GPA Methodology	9
Partnership Building.....	9
Challenges from Established Jurisdictional Relationships.....	9
Human and Financial Resources in Support of Strategic Planning.....	10
Electronic Communications	10
Volunteerism.....	11
The Importance of Achieving Consensus on Regional Issues	11
Short Term Planning and Evaluation Horizons.....	12

THE BIGHT OF THE CALIFORNIAS PILOT PROJECT

BOC Organization	14
Guiding Principles	15
Progress to Date	16
Lessons Learned.....	17
Implementing the GPA Methodology	17
Importance of Cross Sectoral Participation	18
Partnership Building and Attention to Culture.....	18
Project Momentum – Short versus Long Term Goals.....	18
Administrative Structure/Communication.....	19
Transition Strategies.....	19

Introduction

In the 1990s, the health of the world's marine and coastal ecosystems continued to decline. Degradation of the marine environment too often is the result of human activities that use resources beyond replenishment, that dispose of wastes in areas unable to assimilate pollutants, and that physically alter or destroy habitats. Worldwide, the loss or destruction of these critical resources is a direct cause of the deterioration of the economic and social well being of coastal communities. These activities may also imperil human health through the contamination of seafood, and the pollution of swimming beaches and recreational waters. It is estimated that 80% of human activities that threaten the health and productivity of the oceans take place on the land, not on the water.



UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT FROM LAND BASED ACTIVITIES (GPA)

In 1995, 109 nations of the world adopted the United Nations Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land Based Activities (GPA) (United Nations Environment Programme, 1995). The GPA, which is the culmination of 13 years of efforts by the international community, is coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in close cooperation with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Most of the pollution load of the oceans, including municipal, industrial and agricultural wastes and run-off, as well as atmospheric deposition, emanates from land-based activities and affects the most productive areas of the marine environment, including estuaries and near-shore coastal waters.”

*United Nations Environment Programme.
1995.*



The GPA is expected to assist in the implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21 and the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, and will also address the principles and commitments arising from other established global conventions and regional instruments such as:

- the 1985 Montreal Guidelines for the Protection of the Marine Environment against Pollution from Land Based Sources;
- the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);
- the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Waste and Other Matter;
- the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal;
- the Convention on Biodiversity; and
- the United Nations Framework Convention on Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE GPA



The GPA is intended to assist national actions and regional cooperation in the identification of problem areas and issues, the setting of priorities, and the development of measures to prevent, reduce and control the degradation of the marine environment. The GPA also addresses the need to assist the environment in its recovery from the impacts of land-based activities. Under the GPA, regional and sub-regional cooperation is crucial, particularly when the marine area is a shared jurisdiction, such as enclosed or semi-enclosed seas.

The GPA recommends identifying, sharing, and making readily available existing knowledge and experience and declares that:

“...cooperation allows for more accurate identification and assessment of the problems in particular geographic areas and more appropriate establishment of priorities for action in these areas. Such cooperation also strengthens regional and national capacity-building and offers an important avenue for harmonizing and adjusting measures to fit the particular environmental and socio-economic

circumstances. It, moreover, supports a more efficient and cost-effective implementation of the programmes of action.” United Nations Environment Programme. 1995.

The GPA re-emphasizes the role of preventive and precautionary approaches to avoid degradation of marine environments, the need for integrated coastal and marine area management programs in the development of national and regional efforts to protect marine environments; and the necessity for economic incentives, such as the 'polluter pays' principle.

The GPA supports a pragmatic and integrated approach to coastal area management, including as a key tool, the identification and assessment of problems and priorities. Problems may include sewage, persistent organic pollutants (POPs), heavy metals, hydrocarbons; nutrients, marine debris, physical alterations and destruction of habitats. The ecosystems of concern often include watersheds, estuaries, wetlands, littoral environments, offshore reefs and small islands. The establishment of management objectives, priorities for action, and criteria to evaluate effectiveness, should take into account the interests of all stakeholders including governments, NGOs, First Nations and Native Americans, women and others.



The GPA provides a process for developing programs of action that can be used by all countries; those which are highly industrialized and those with developing economies; and is applicable at the regional, national and more local levels.

The GPA methodology has six recommended steps:

- identification and assessment of problems
- establishment of priorities
- setting management objectives for priority problems
- identification, evaluation and selection of strategies and measures, including management approaches
- adoption of criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of strategies and programs

- program support elements such as integration with existing sustainable development objectives and programs, enforcement and financial mechanisms, education and training, research, contingency planning, and public participation.

COMMISSION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) is an international organization whose members comprise Canada, Mexico and the United States. The CEC was created under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) to address regional environmental concerns, to address trade and environment issues and to promote the effective enforcement of environmental law. The CEC facilitates cooperation and public participation to foster conservation, protection and enhancement of the North American environment for the benefit of present and future generations, in the context of increasing economic, trade and social links among the three countries.



Canada, Mexico and the United States were among the 109 nations signatory to the GPA. Implementation of the GPA in these countries is being carried out through a number of initiatives, one of which is under the sponsorship of the CEC.

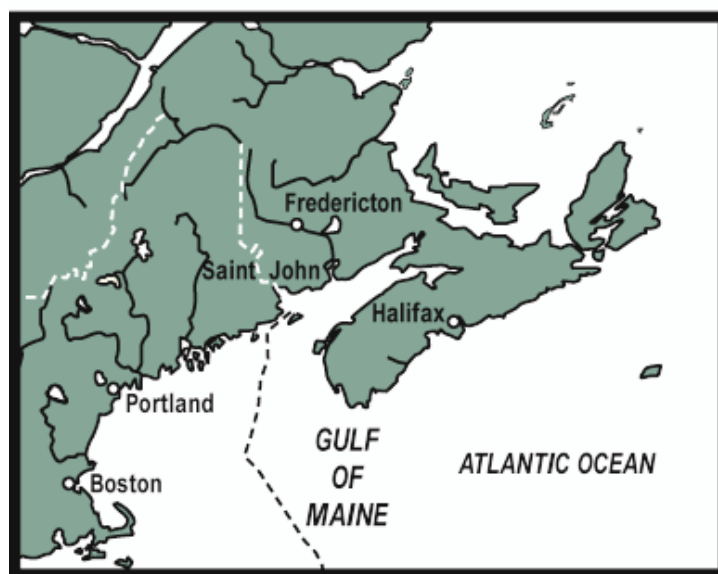
The CEC in 1996 launched two initiatives on implementing the GPA in a transboundary context. One was in the Gulf of Maine, which is shared by Canada and the United States; the other in the Bight of the Californias, a coastal region shared by Mexico and the United States. These were pilot projects aimed at demonstrating the feasibility of implementing the GPA in North America. The CEC's interest in working with government agencies and local communities in demonstrating how the GPA can be implemented in a real life context is part of a larger interest within the CEC of conserving marine and coastal ecosystems.

The Gulf of Maine Pilot Project



The coastal regions of the Gulf of Maine are home to some 3.6 million people who live and derive benefit from their proximity to this relatively healthy and productive marine environment. Traditional livelihoods in the region were first dependent on the harvest of the rich resources found on both the land and in the sea. The marine and coastal environment has also supported initiatives in transportation, commerce, the shipping of goods and the assimilation of wastes. The beauty and diversity of the Gulf's coastal landscapes attract thousands of tourists each season, providing significant economic benefits to local communities.

Although the Region may be seen as relatively undamaged, there are undeniable indications that the health and productivity of the Gulf marine ecosystem is being compromised by the wide range of human activities that take place on its waters and along its coasts. Little quantitative information is available on the pre-European conditions of the Gulf ecosystem, however it is clear from the reading of historical documents, that coastal populations of fish and wildlife have



been decimated, and that large tracts of important habitats such as coastal saltmarshes have been lost or severely degraded. Not enough information is available on continuing changes in the sources and quantities of persistent chemicals and nutrients that continue to be discharged in this watershed. Although much of the environmental damage in the Gulf Region appears to be largely confined to coastal areas and harbours, there is a limited scientific capacity to predict the effects of these changes on the larger Gulf ecosystem.

It is critical that prompt and concerted efforts be initiated to stem the rate of habitat loss in the Region, to reduce the loadings of persistent pollutants and chemicals, and to support the restoration of important damaged ecosystems. Beginning in 1996, in Durham, New Hampshire, the CEC has assisted a group of individuals from an array of coastal sectors (including environmental advocacy and community action groups, research and educational institutes and organizations, business and industry, three levels of government, and First Nations and Native Americans) in the formation of a bi-national cross-sectoral partnership, the Global Programme of Action Coalition for the Gulf of Maine (GPAC).

GPAC ORGANIZATION

The goal of the GPAC is to establish a collaborative bi-national, cross-sectoral organization dedicated entirely to the implementation of the GPA in the Gulf of Maine Region. Primarily volunteer based, the GPA Coalition for the Gulf of Maine (GPAC) has worked to develop a consensus on priority land based activities that are contributing to the deterioration of marine habitats in this critical ecosystem, and to take action, or encourage others to take action to curb their impacts.

The GPAC determined that successful implementation of the GPA could only be achieved through the participation of all sectors of the community. It was clear that those 'without (effluent) pipes' could not successfully prescribe and implement significant change in existing environmental performance without the cooperation and voluntary participation of those 'with pipes.' Within the Gulf Region, large industry is only one of the potential sources of pollution. Much damage results from the pipes and activities of small industry, municipalities, and other resource users. To ensure that all aspects of land based activities are addressed GPAC has reached out to proponents, managers and users from municipalities and other agencies of government, First Nations and Native American Tribes, resource industries (agriculture, forestry and fishing), land developers, transportation and communication, and the recreation and tourism sector.



Throughout its course the GPAC struggled to gain participation from sectors such as business and industry, research, municipalities and First Nations and Native American Tribes. GPAC is one of the first cross-sectoral, bi-national organizations that has included the representation of native peoples from both the United States and Canada. Throughout its

short history, the GPAC has continued to evolve and to refine its membership, and to draw on additional participation from the wider community.

The GPAC was established with approximately forty members, a group size that has remained relatively stable. Task Groups, chaired by a GPAC member, but open to others, were created to assist with specific activities and issues. Bi-national workshops were convened to poll the resources of larger, more diverse groups. To date, over 350 persons have been directly involved in some aspect of GPAC activity.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Development and implementation of the GPAC and its activities was based on the following strategic principles:

- Cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary, bi-national consensus is needed on the identification and ranking of significant habitat issues and toxic contaminants in the region.
- Strategic identification, synthesis and integration of existing work in the Gulf of Maine should reduce overlap and needless repetition of effort.
- Integration of effort can be achieved through collaborative partnering with existing institutions, organizations, communities and the private sector that are already at work in environmental management in the region, or can be encouraged to participate.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Since the formation of GPAC in the summer of 1997, a significant program of consensus building, strategic planning, and project implementation has been accomplished, largely through the voluntary efforts of all members and within a total financial budget of less than \$500,000 CAN. GPAC has become a strong, animating force in the region, challenging, supporting and inspiring the activities of its members and others that come within its sphere of influence.

In a little over three years, GPAC has completed the following measurable achievements:

- six cross-sectoral, bi-national meetings of the Coalition
- two major bi-national, multi-sectoral workshops
- seven comprehensive scoping papers on conditions in the region related to pollution and habitat disturbance
- consensus on fifteen priority environmental issues common throughout the Gulf of Maine region
- development of targeted strategies to address these issues
- implementation of five pilot projects in response to these strategies
- strategic assessment of GPA targets in the Gulf of Maine
- ongoing interaction and information sharing with the Bight of the California's sister pilot project

As a result of the interactive work by this group of highly committed individuals there has been in considerable advancement in the development of four critical elements for GPA implementation:

- a base of critical scientific information on the Gulf Region's natural systems and built environments;
- strong collegial relationships among key scientists, decision-makers and advocates, both internal and external to the Region;
- consensus on the scope of the GPA in the Region, and the priority issues for action; and
- over 350 persons, from all sectors of the community, who have voluntarily participated in some aspect of the GPAC activities in the Region, representing a considerable resource for future advancement of the GPA.



Copyright John D. Clarke

In its short history, the GPAC has achieved measurable progress in implementing the first steps of the GPA methodology in this region. However, much more work is needed in the establishment of regional management targets and objectives; the implementation of directed programs of action, and in the identification of realistic, measurable criteria for the evaluation of progress and effectiveness.

LESSONS LEARNED

In the short time frame since its formation, the GPAC has developed into a highly cohesive group, focused on the achievement of common goals and objectives. The building of such productive cross-sectoral relationships is challenging, without the added complexity contributed by bi-national issues. Many of the formative steps faced by the GPAC are common to the creation of any new organization, and simply require time and attention. Other issues arising during the past three years appear to be more specific to the Global Programme itself, or to its implementation in a regional seas context.

A number of the lessons learned by the GPAC are appropriate for application to the implementation of the GPA in other regions and have been described briefly in the following sections.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GPA METHODOLOGY

The United Nations Global Programme of Action is recognizably an instrument of governance, designed primarily to address the role and function of government agencies in effecting change in societal practice. As such, application of the GPA methodology would generally be expected to be a responsibility of government, and would be supported with fiscal and human resources. Working as a cross-sectoral partnership, the GPAC relied only on the financial resources provided by its sponsor, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, and the voluntary participation of its members. Working in this ad-hoc context, the GPAC focussed on fostering individual relationships and productive partnerships as the primary tool for change. Despite this non-government approach, it is the consensus of the GPAC that **the methodology for implementation of the GPA as laid out in the UNEP document, provides an effective guideline for the development of multi-stakeholder initiatives for change in land-based activities that impact on marine and coastal environments.**

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

It is generally accepted that the greatest potential for societal change exists when the broadest cross-section of a community participates. Such multi-sectoral partnerships can require considerable time for the development of trust, the appreciation of alternative viewpoints, and the participation in shared initiatives. The number and diversity of backgrounds of participants in the GPAC process has provided a broad view of issues, as well as insight into other regional initiatives and projects. The GPAC has achieved an enviable measure of success in involving a broad spectrum of the community, but members continue to recognize the need to improve participation by municipalities, industry, and Native Americans.

It is obvious that in the Region of the Gulf of Maine, many similarities exist between the United States and Canada, such as a common language, cultural parallels, and similar governmental structures. However, there are also many unexpected cultural and operational differences in the development and enforcement of environmental policies and legislation; in the reporting and recording of environmental protection information; in the emerging roles of the First Nations and Native American Tribes; and in the focus and activities of community-based organizations. Additionally, there were both benefits and constraints that arose from the existing relationships, policies and programs of the established regional environmental research and management organizations. **Within the GPAC, the sharing of differing perspectives and methods was important to the achievement of collaborative viewpoints and partnership activities.** Successful sectoral partnerships are largely the product of cooperative, collegial relationships between individuals, an on-going, but highly rewarding experience.

CHALLENGES FROM ESTABLISHED JURISDICTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The application of the GPA methodology in the Gulf of Maine Region must be viewed as an overlay to established organizations, mechanisms, and protocols of government and society. Within these

two industrialized nations, there are many levels of government responsible for management and enforcement of the activities that would normally fall under the umbrella of the GPA. Consequently, there is a challenge for any new organization focussed on GPA issues to demonstrate the value added by their actions. The value added by the GPAC has been an ongoing debate, as some government representatives have argued forcibly that existing staff, resources and programs are already at work in the Region on GPA related issues, and therefore effective mechanisms for GPA implementation already exist. **Notwithstanding the fact that governments are addressing environmental protection and conservation initiatives in this Region, there is clear evidence that there has not yet been sufficient, significant change in the manner in which land based activities are undertaken in this Region.** The GPAC remains convinced that there is an immediate need for more education, commitment and action to advance the principles of the GPA throughout the Gulf of Maine.

HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES IN SUPPORT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Time allocated to strategic planning is crucial to the achievement of group consensus, and group ownership of both process and products. Administrative and coordination support for strategic planning, core services, and catalytic funding for projects is critical to the success of both short and long-term objectives. The Gulf of Maine covers such a large geographic area that meetings of the GPAC are costly in terms of both financial and human resources. Government agencies do not universally support travel for staff outside of their jurisdictions, nor can NGO's, small business and researchers absorb additional travel costs in already constrained budgets. In addition to the time and resources volunteered by the GPAC members, or contributed by associated government programs, the GPAC has been fortunate to have been provided with short-term financial support from the Commission for Environmental Cooperation. **Financial support for core administrative and coordination activities is essential to the effective operation and sustainability of the GPAC and other multi-sectoral organizations.**

The CEC funding was based on a standard government program time frame of three years, after which the GPAC was expected to become self sustaining, or be integrated into existing government and/or community organizations and initiatives. **This three-year window of opportunity supported the establishment of this unique partnership organization, demonstrably efficient in the definition and ratification of strategic objectives, but hindered in its ability to ensure progress on these objectives through a lack of long-term financial resources.** Without recourse to some level of core financial support, the future for the GPAC appears bleak at best.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Given the size of the geographic area served, the GPAC quickly developed a reliance on the electronic medium, using both an Internet web page and a list server to efficiently and cost effectively provide access to documentation and facilitate communications with forty persons. In addition to serving the members of the GPAC in the region, individuals residing outside the Region

(Washington, D.C, Ottawa, and Mexico) could also be included in the communication loop. **Electronic communication technology, although not without its pitfalls, continues to play an important role in the successful implementation of the GPAC initiatives.**

VOLUNTEERISM

Early in the establishment of the GPAC, it became clear that, to some degree, participation by all the GPAC members must be regarded as a form of volunteerism. With few exceptions, the GPAC did not have the resources to recompense members for time spent in organization or implementation. A few members of the GPAC participated as community volunteers. Most of the GPAC members pursued full time careers as environmental staff for government, private sector, and advocacy and community based organizations. Although participation in the GPAC was within the scope of their professional interests, it was not a requirement of their position. Most members added the GPAC responsibilities to an already overwhelming workload. Generally this individual commitment would result in unpaid overtime and increased hours away from family members, a situation that must place GPAC participation in the context of volunteered activities. Despite this demand on the individual, the GPAC has developed a record for performance that could be the envy of many agencies with full-time staff resources.

Special reference must be made to the work of the GPAC Executive Committee (GPAC Co-Chairs, the CEC Program Manager, and the GPAC Coordinator) and the GPAC Task Group Chairs. These individuals, without exception, took on responsibilities and workloads well beyond that covered by contracts or salaries. Their commitment inspired their colleagues and insured that the major initiatives and day-to-day operations of the GPAC continued in a timely and efficient manner.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ACHIEVING CONSENSUS ON REGIONAL ISSUES

Implementation of the GPA in a regional sea can be challenged by the lack of region-wide acceptance of important issues. **Without strong, compelling shared international priorities for action, it is difficult to galvanize local attention, commitment and resources.** In such a diverse geographic area as the Gulf of Maine, with differing levels of urbanization and resource use, issues of concern related to the effects of land based activities can, and did, vary between sectors, states and provinces, and even local areas.

Early in the GPAC process, individual members asserted that priority issues for action in the Gulf of Maine Region had already been identified. On examination, the GPAC found it difficult to confirm either a list of regionally valid and ratified priority issues, or an existing, regionally-based process that could lead to their identification and



Copyright John D. Clarke

ratification. It was obvious that certain issues, with value to certain sectors or local areas, had been defined, but there were no instances where these priorities had been widely communicated or ratified throughout the Region. The task of identifying regionally significant shared issues was determined to be a first priority for action by the GPAC.

In its search for regionally significant priorities, the GPAC ensured that issues of importance to local areas but not universally significant throughout the Region, were not lost, overlooked, or over-generalized. Examination of the fifteen priority issues identified by the GPAC will reveal that these issues, though common throughout the Gulf, may be of lesser or greater importance in different areas of the Region. If the GPAC had focussed only on issues universally held as a high priority throughout the entire Gulf region, locally critical issues would be overlooked, and the motivation, conviction and ability of smaller, community based organizations to effect beneficial change would be undermined.

SHORT TERM PLANNING AND EVALUATION HORIZONS

The GPAC has concluded that implementation of the principles of the GPA in the Gulf of Maine will require a sustained long-term commitment from all participants. Successful change in land based activities will only result from changes in societal values and practices that are unlikely to occur in the short-term. Ironically, expectations for progress on the GPA can be based on unrealistic schedules for achievement, more in keeping with political time frames than with the time needed to effect substantive societal change. When faced with constraints of time and resources, participants in a partnership building process like the GPAC can become understandably distracted by the need for short-term demonstrations of achievement, rather than remaining focussed on long-term, enduring measures of success. **Sectoral partnerships, measured by the successful relationships crafted between individuals, need time to grow before the true measure of their success can be taken.** It is important for all individuals working to advance the GPA not to judge progress too harshly in the short term. Planning horizons should establish longer time frames (20 years) with achievable short-term milestones.

The Bight of the Californias

Pilot Project



The Bight of the Californias extends from Point Conception west of Santa Barbara in Southern California (USA) to Cabo Colonett and Bahia de San Quintin in Baja California, Mexico. This coastal region is home to a growing population of 15.5 million people, as people are attracted to the area's diverse economy, mild climate and natural coastal beauty.

Continued population growth is taking a toll on the very characteristics that make this area so attractive. Sewage spills, beach erosion and loss of habitat are typical consequences of rapid urbanization, directly impacting the marine and coastal environments, the quality of human life and coastal economies.

A *bight* is a bend in a coastline which forms an open bay.

The Bight of the Californias Pilot Project area (the Bight) consists of the bi-national coastal region extending from Encinitas in northern San Diego County to Ensenada and the Bahia de Todos Santos in Baja California. This sub-region was selected because it contains major urban areas with a population of over four million residents and because of the particular characteristics of its coastal environment. Within the Pilot Project area, population growth projections predict an additional increase of two million new residents within the next 15 years. This level of continued growth will undoubtedly strain the natural resources and landscapes of the marine environment.



Consequently, the number of organizations and agencies with a focus on marine degradation issues has markedly increased in recent years, as has the level of cross border communication and collaboration between and among the various sectors of American and Mexican society.

In both the United States and Mexico, many positive efforts are already in place to constructively address adverse impacts to marine environments from increased coastal land use. However, there is generally a lack of cross-sectoral, cross-discipline and cross-border coordination. Likewise, while a great deal of marine monitoring information is available in the United States, coordinated data gathering has been lacking in Mexico. Reliable information regarding land-based sources of pollution discharged into local watersheds remains largely unavailable throughout the Bight area.

The Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) has offered a forum for local stakeholders from Mexico and the United States to address these regional issues by providing an approach for improving coordination, synergy and technology transfer between these two nations. The Bight bi-national area is strategically positioned to take advantage of the economic opportunities offered by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and increasingly functions as a single economic “super region.” However, continued attention is needed to ensure that this opportunity for economic prosperity does not come at the expense of the area’s rich and diverse natural resources. The work of the Bight of the Californias Pilot Project has become an important ingredient to ensure the environmental integrity of the area’s marine resources and economic prosperity.

The Bight of the Californias Pilot Project seeks to identify, coordinate and facilitate information exchange among the individuals and activities currently underway in the region, with the ultimate goal of creating mechanisms among local stakeholders that support regional implementation of the GPA. The Pilot Project is designed to provoke support for the protection of the environmental and economic value of the Bight among government, business and the public. This orientation includes the recognition and need for actions directed at land-based impacts within the regional watersheds.

BOC ORGANIZATION

In 1997, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation helped organize a bi-national committee (Ad Hoc Committee) to assist in carrying out a pilot project for the implementation of the GPA in the Bight of the Californias (BOC). The Ad Hoc Committee is made up of approximately 100 representatives from federal, state, regional, and local governments, indigenous groups, the private sector, academia, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from both Mexico and the United States. As all sectors of society impact local watersheds, a wide variety of stakeholders were invited to participate in the Pilot Project in order to assure cross-sectoral support for the goals of the GPA.



The Ad Hoc Committee, which initially met twice a year, now meets annually. While a core group of Ad Hoc Committee members have remained committed to the project, securing participation from the business, industry and local government sectors has been difficult. Therefore, over the project life, the Ad Hoc Committee has subsequently evolved and changed and continues to seek additional participation from a larger cross section of local stakeholders.

An Executive Committee was formed to direct on-going activities related to the Pilot Project, in concert with the CEC, via a contracted Project Liaison. Participation on the Ad Hoc and Executive Committees is voluntary. The Executive Committee is led by Co-Chairs from each country who, during the first phase of the Pilot Project (1997-99) were both from academia. In an attempt to advance the Pilot Project from the theoretical framework created in the first phase to a more practical policy level, the Co-Chairs of the second phase (1999- present) are governmental officials.

At the inception of the Pilot Project, five Task Groups were established to address the following topics:

- Finance and Resource Sustainability;
- Behavior, Education, Communication;
- Information Clearinghouse;
- Pollution and Monitoring; and
- Habitats.

These Task Groups were reconfigured during the second phase of the Pilot Project to better coincide with the Pilot Project Regional Action Plan and the Transition Strategy of the Ad Hoc Committee. The new Task Groups include:

- a GIS Technical Committee,
- a Monitoring Task Group,
- a Funding Workgroup; and
- an outreach and education Task Group.

The new structure reflects the dynamic nature of the Pilot Project and will facilitate the implementation of existing project activities and the transition of these activities into self-sustaining, long-term, regional efforts.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles are guiding implementation of the Bight of the Californias Pilot Project:

- Recognize and build upon what is already being done in the region relating to coastal contamination. Integrate existing efforts and encourage synergy among programming.
- Seek a bi-national and sectoral balance in the organizational structure created for the project.
- Respect national differences while developing joint goals.
- Make all activities accessible and transparent.
- Develop long-term institutional support for GPA-related activities beyond the Pilot Project.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Over the first four years of the Pilot Project, the Ad Hoc Committee has had many accomplishments and achieved many short-term goals. One of the most significant accomplishments to date has been the relationship building that has occurred across sectors, across disciplines and across borders. Friendship and trust has been nurtured, which in turn has fostered dialogue, collaboration and mutual understanding.

One area where this is best displayed is in the Bight-wide monitoring effort, the first of its kind in the region. On another front, a strong commitment has been made in the region through a significant level of direct and in-kind support by various agencies and organizations, which has augmented the funding support of the CEC. Finally, a strong regional institutional base has now been established from which local implementation of the principles of the GPA can be promoted long into the future. Other notable progress is as follows:

- Inventories of regional activities consistent with the GPA were prepared and made available on the Bight of the Californias Web site (these data are currently being updated and the inventory redesigned).
- Bight-wide water quality monitoring was initiated. This is the first bi-national effort in the region and required technology transfers, inter-calibration of instruments, and development of comparable data for both sides of the border. This monitoring partnership is ongoing.
- A Geographic Information System (GIS)-based Point and Non-point Source Inventory of coastal contamination has been initiated. Two technical working groups have been formed on either side of the border and maintain regular communication and coordination. Outside funding has been garnered for implementation of the project on both sides of the border. Eventually, the project will produce a series of bi-national maps showing various attributes related to land based sources of marine pollution.
- A bilingual information pamphlet was prepared for decision-makers, academia, the business sector and the public at large. It describes the GPA, the CEC and the Bight of the Californias Pilot Project in general, participating agencies, and the Project's purpose, objectives, accomplishments to date, and proposed activities. This pamphlet is being distributed to educate the local stakeholders and spawn interest in the project.
- Six Ad Hoc Committee meetings have been held, alternating between Mexico and the United States, and a Bi-national Executive Committee has been formed that meets approximately every six weeks.



- Surveys were conducted regarding habitat and contamination source priorities.
- A Regional Action Plan was drafted and is being implemented.
- The Web site for the project, originally located at CEC headquarters in Montreal, has been moved to the region (<http://www.sandag.cog.ca.us/bight/>). The site will be redesigned, updated and maintained in the region.
- A list serve (PACIFICO) was created specifically for this pilot project and is used to maintain communication with the Ad Hoc Committee.
- Participation and interaction with the Gulf of Maine sister pilot project has continued since the inception of the project.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Bight of the Californias Pilot Project has made great progress over the last four years in the areas of relationship building, identification of common problems, goals and objectives and recognition of the significant differences that exist within the region. While the Ad Hoc Committee is still in a formative stage, there has already been demonstrated a great deal of local commitment to



the Pilot Project, and a solid organizational base is now in place. Many of the early challenges that the Project has faced are common to all organizations upon inception. The persistence and dedication to the goals and objectives by a number of the stakeholders has proven to be the core strength of the Bight Pilot Project. Other issues have been related to basic issues of culture and differing levels of economic, social and political support and simple questions of organizational structure, leadership and legitimacy.

IMPLEMENTING THE GPA METHODOLOGY

From project inception, the GPA was recognized as a significant tool for developing a regional program to address marine degradation. However, while some interpret the methodology as a linear structure, others interpreted it as a more organic process, where one step is never completed, but rather built upon and continually revisited as new information is obtained or acquired. While some Ad Hoc members were inclined to follow the GPA verbatim, others wanted more flexibility, allowing for local/regional realities and circumstances. This subsequently slowed project progress and momentum was sacrificed. **Ultimately, it was clear that the GPA is better viewed as a guide, rather than a directive.** In other words, it is a tool to support regional activities, not an externally imposed requirement. A suggested compromise was to select a few short-term projects generally conforming to the objectives of the GPA, to show early results, while incorporating the GPA steps in the longer-term.

IMPORTANCE OF CROSS-SECTOR PARTICIPATION

Although the Pilot Project attempted to include all the relevant sectors and stakeholders in the Project area, academic participation dominated the make-up of the Ad Hoc Committee for the first few years. **It became clear as the Pilot Project proceeded that, in order to affect change in the region, more industry, private sector, governmental and policy oriented participation was needed.** One of the difficulties that interfered with attempts to secure support among local government, business and industry is the lack of understanding and commitment to the goals and objectives of the GPA by these sectors. This supports the notion that a substantial educational effort should be directed at elected officials and the private sector. It also points to the need to continue the Pilot Project as a guide for decision-makers regarding marine and coastal conservation and degradation issues.

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING AND ATTENTION TO CULTURE

Historical and economic factors complicate relationships between Mexico and the United States. The gathering of groups and individuals from both sides of the border who share similar concerns and interests, and often also similar expertise, has begun to erase traditional distrust. However, while the Pilot Project's main objective is the coordination of bi-national efforts to implement the GPA, coordination is not universally viewed in positive terms. Some consider it a threat that may compromise hard-fought roles or "turf". Significant differences also continue to exist in cross-border needs and priorities, resources, culture, political and economic systems, and practice. **To better embrace these differences, it has been determined that Pilot Project activities need not be identical in construct and execution on both sides of the border.** Rather, they may proceed in parallel fashion as long as that makes sense, moving gradually towards integration, if and when that becomes possible. It should never be forced.

PROJECT MOMENTUM – SHORT VS. LONG TERM GOALS

The GPA is a very ambitious methodology designed to address an extremely complex issue area. Plans must be made looking far beyond a typical three-year funding cycle. Because of the vulnerability of the Pilot Project funding beyond the short term, efforts should be made from the start to identify new funding sources to augment CEC support and assure the longevity of the project beyond CEC participation. **It is extremely important to focus on long term goals and objectives, but care must be taken when estimating time needed to complete tasks, particularly when dealing in a bi-national context.**

Although the Pilot Project has not yet accomplished all the steps in the GPA methodology, the primary steps have been taken to solidify a regional structure where the goals and objectives of the GPA now have the support of a framework of cross border relationships and local institutional support. **The importance of tangible short-term accomplishments (ocean monitoring, directories, reports, etc.) in maintaining momentum and building relationships should not be underestimated.** Likewise, individual or organizational needs and interests should be identified so as to keep the participants involved by meeting these needs.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE/COMMUNICATION

While the CEC has played an integral role in the inception and support of the Bight of the Californias Pilot Project, the Ad Hoc Committee has found that central control and the need for having all documentation prepared in both English and Spanish in Montreal made Project progress more difficult and time consuming. **Shifting coordination of the project to the region, including control of the web site and list serve, improved this situation a great deal by giving the local Executive Committee and Project Liaison more flexibility and ownership over the responsibility of maintaining communication with the Ad Hoc Committee.** By shifting these responsibilities an important step was taken towards project independence and regional maintenance.

The relatively large membership of the Ad Hoc Committee necessitated continued communication as an absolutely critical element for maintaining project momentum. For example, although members of specific Task Groups or the Executive Committee may be involved in ongoing activities, if regular updates of progress were not provided to all Ad Hoc Committee members, it could appear as if the Pilot Project has in fact stalled.

TRANSITION STRATEGIES

The support of CEC was critical to initiate the Pilot Project and to sustain its development. **As the Project evolved, it was important to move the sense of ownership to the region (away from CEC) and begin to develop a strategy to strengthen regional support.** However, core administrative and coordination support from the CEC has been crucial and continued partnerships should be considered beyond the pilot project phase to assist with consolidating the transition. This key step was taken at the last Ad Hoc Committee meeting with its approval of a transition strategy.

Three lessons can be learned from this transitional phase:

- The CEC needs to maintain its presence throughout the process. That involvement is just as critical during the transitional phase as it is during the initial start-up stage.
- The transition strategy should be a key requirement and should be developed earlier in the process.
- The participants should understand their respective roles and responsibilities, which the transition strategy should detail, to avoid any misperceptions.