

BAJA CALIFORNIA – CONSERVATION SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM

Title: Applying science to the conservation and management of natural resources on the Baja California Peninsula and the Gulf of California

Mission: Bring together scientists, governmental representatives and conservationists working throughout the Baja California peninsula and the Gulf of California to promote the exchange of information, increase collaboration in conservation and management of natural resources and produce concrete results for long-term conservation in the region.

Results :

GOAL #1: Create a space in which to share best practices and real examples of the use of science in the conservation and management of natural resources on the Baja California Peninsula and the Gulf of California

The Conservation Science Symposium was held in Loreto, BCS from the 24 to the 27 of May 2011. The focus of the symposium was on applied science- conservation science- and all topics and accepted presentations went beyond ‘just science’ or ‘just conservation’ and focused on the blending of the two to accomplish conservation gains throughout the region. Presenters shared best practices, examples of past successes and ideas for future work, all with the common theme of applying science to the conservation and management of natural resources on the Baja California peninsula and Gulf of California.

Rick Brusca, organizer of the first Gulf science symposium and one of the first scientists working in the region, opened the event and set the tone at a reception held in the historic center of Loreto on Wednesday, May 25. Then, for three full days of presentations, round tables and networking events, some of the region’s most renowned scientists and conservationists presented their experiences working throughout Northwest Mexico. Luis Fueyo, Commissioner of Mexico’s Natural Protected Areas, closed the event with a keynote address at the farewell dinner.

In addition to the main symposium events, a number of side meetings and events were held, taking full advantage of the gathering of experts. Groups such as Grupo Tortuguero, Sumar, Eco-Alianza de Loreto, NiParaja, and Laguna San Ignacio Ecosystem Science Project had formal meetings, working groups and events during the symposium. A large number of informal events and meetings also took place.

GOAL #2: Establish common conservation goals for the region along with a series of actions to accomplish these goals.

The event organizing committee consisted of key players from the region’s nonprofit organizations, foundations, scientific institutions and government agencies. This committee, based on the results of a survey of the region’s conservationists and scientists, created an agenda that focused on the top environmental issues/topics in the region. These issues/topics included Fisheries and Community, Protected Areas and Biodiversity, Governance and Conservation, Water Quality and Quantity, and Community Involvement in Science and Conservation. Additionally, a number of subtopics were explored, including Species of Concern, Island Habitats and more. The committee then identified session chairs for each session, choosing some of the top scientists and conservationists working in the region to lead these sessions. These session chairs gathered together presenters that could share their best practices and real life examples of applied science- or conservation science- in the region. Presenters were given a set of questions related to their topic that they were encouraged to discuss throughout their presentation, and in open discussion periods at the end of each session. These focus questions encouraged the discussion of priorities for conservation, goals for these priorities and key actions for accomplishing these goals. These focus questions spurred deep and lively discussions, and in some cases resulted in written

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agreements and/or action plans (eg. agreement between FMCN and CONANP during the Governance session). All discussions were recorded and can be accessed on the symposium website, described below.

GOAL #3: Bring together key players working in the region in order to create opportunities for the exchange of ideas, increased collaboration and networking.

Between 250 and 300 individuals from around the region and the U.S. attended the Conservation Science Symposium. (There were a number of participants that never completed their registration; we have 251 individuals officially registered, however we know more than that actually attended the event). These individuals represented over 100 institutions working in the region, from universities, government agencies, non-profits, foundations, businesses and more.

A total of 205 individual were given scholarships to attend the event. Scholarships consisted of registration waivers, travel and/or hotel. Over \$50,000 was dedicated to attendee scholarships.

The meeting was held in the center of Loreto, using space along the malecon and the central plaza. The symposium layout and agenda was specifically designed to maximize networking opportunities and encourage the exchange of ideas between participants. Additionally, the layout and agenda was designed to promote the patronization of a variety of local restaurants, bars and shops.

Product: Conservation Science Website

In lieu of printed materials and a follow up proceedings book, a website was created to serve as the event's proceedings. At this site you can find an event description, abstracts, PDF copies and vocal recording of all sessions and presentations, a list of attendees and their contact information, copies of all media and articles related to the symposium, and a collection of photos from the event. For this reason, none of this information is presented in this final report and instead we have included a brief synopsis of the event in this report and ask you to please visit the website for event details.

www.conservationsscience.com.mx

Impact to the Loreto Economy

It is estimated that over \$100,000 was injected into the local economy of Loreto thanks to this meeting. We did not put in place any formal tool to track how much the symposium as a whole contributed to the local economy, but we can get a rough idea. The direct symposium costs in Mexico, which included a Loreto coordinator, hotel and restaurant payments, and administrative costs for our local partners (EAL, Grupo Tortuguero and NiParaja), totaled approximately \$68,000. Add to this the hotel, food and transportation costs of all participants, together with payments to local vendors for the various side receptions and meetings held throughout the week, and it is easy to reach a figure over \$100,000.

Budget and Funding Requested

The final event costs totaled \$147,950. The support by the Baja Funders network, along with other 'outside the box' funders, was astounding, with all but one of the traditional Baja Funders supporting the event and two additional funders coming on board. We thank all of you for your confidence in and support of this event.

Event funders included the International Community Foundation, the Marisla Foundation, the Walton Foundation, the Helmsley Trust, the Packard Foundation, Linda and Tony Kinninger, the JiJi Foundation, the Christensen Fund, the Fondo Mexicano para la Conservacion de la Naturaleza and Environment Now. Please see the final budget, attached, for details.