



TRIP REPORT

April 17-21, 2008

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The IR/PS team visited El Barril from April 17-21, 2008. This trip provided an opportunity to transition existing projects between second and first year consultants and to prepare the community for an upcoming groundwater survey. Progress was made in continuing projects in education, the fishing cooperative, aquaculture exploration, water resource development and health, and the team began discussions with women's coop about potential business ventures.

The main projects for this trip were related to our work with the aquaculture project and the introduction of the new scholarship program to the community. The Comisión Nacional de Areas Naturales Protegidas (CONANP) representatives met with community members and the team to discuss the next steps in aquaculture exploration process. Meetings with the local schoolteachers about the scholarships were followed by announcements at the Town Hall meeting, distribution of application forms, and discussion with families who have children that are eligible to apply.

In previous trips, water was identified as an increasingly large issue for the community. The team continued to assess water needs, and prepared the community for an upcoming groundwater survey to take place in May. The news was met with much enthusiasm, as the community increasingly worries about their existing water source. School projects remained a priority, and the team conducted a computer and arts and crafts project with the children. The school teachers expressed concerns about the feasibility of using new technology in the schools, and the team agreed to look into improving the power source for the new projector and computer. The community garden is thriving, despite the inability to carry out the incentive plan that was put in place in December.

The Baja Project was thrilled to see that the now finished health clinic was operational and that doctors were making regular monthly visits. The team was also encouraged by interest among the women's group to begin using some of the skills that CONANP taught to start a seafood products business.

II. INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVES

The trip team included second year IR/PS students: Nicola Hedge, John Kucharski, Matthew Owens and Lori Webster; and first year students: Kimberly Ascoli, Shannon Pallone, Preston Sharp and Hallie Stohler.

Overall Goals:

- Better understand accounting practices and further explore the idea of purchasing a vehicle and selling fish to new markets;
- Assess the feasibility of implementing an aquaculture pilot this summer and coordinate with CONANP for the feasibility study;
- Foster learning and creativity through ongoing education programs for the children;
- Coordinate with community to implement scholarship program;
- Prepare community for upcoming water survey;
- Conduct a community meeting to update the community and discuss current and upcoming program activities;
- Assess readiness of Women's Group to explore potential markets for seafood products;
- Check status of ongoing community garden project;
- Continue to strengthen and build personal relationships with the community.

III. ITINERARY

Thursday, 17 April

9 am: Team meets and departs from Montgomery Field.

1 pm: Arrive in El Barril.

3 pm: Group visits town to set up meetings and announce the upcoming Town Hall meeting.

5 pm: Group visits school and meets with new teacher for the Primaria.

Friday, 18 April

6-11 am: Nicola, Matt, John, Hallie, Preston go fishing with Lino, Luis and Jesus.

9 am: Kim, Lori and Shannon meet with women's group.

11 am: Kim, Lori and Shannon visit school.

4 pm: Kim, Matt and John met with Mobile Health Clinic.

Saturday, 19 April

10 am: Lori, Shannon, Hallie, Preston, John conduct children's activity at the school.

11 am – 1 pm: Kim, Matt, Nicola meet with fishing co-op.

12 pm: John, Hallie, Lori discuss scholarships with the school teachers

3 pm: Group meets with Conamp to discuss Aquaculture progress

4 pm: Volleyball game with the town

7 pm: Dinner with La Mancha Staff

Sunday, 20 April

10 am: Baja Team Meeting to prepare for Community Town Hall Meeting

11 am: Kim, Matt and Nicola visit the Community Garden

1 pm: Shannon and Hallie discuss upcoming water survey with Luis

2 pm: John and Hallie discuss scholarships with parents

3 pm: Community Town Hall Meeting

Monday, 21 April

9:30 am: Group visits community garden to check on progress.

10:30 am: Team departs from El Barril.

2 pm: Team arrives at Montgomery Field.

IV. FINDINGS

A. Education & Scholarship

Computer Arts and Crafts Projects

Objective: Work with primary school students to enhance their computer skills and creativity through a follow-up to our play writing exercise.

Hallie, Preston, John, Lori and Shannon conducted a two hour workshop with the students to create puppets and movie posters to continue the story telling theme from the December trip. The activity's primary focus was to introduce the students to the graphic design programs on the computers and reinforce the importance of protagonists and antagonists in storytelling through the creation of puppets representing the lead characters in each child's story.

The children began by thinking of ideas for their own individual stories and then illustrating those ideas through a movie poster with a title and drawings. Then the students used paper bags and craft supplies to construct puppets. The students were broken into two groups, with each group spending half of the time on each project. The school teachers were present as well and got involved in the creation of the puppets.

The students enjoyed the entire workshop, creating multiple movie posters and exploring the different tools included in Microsoft Paint to create visually interesting titles and drawings. Each student found an idea they were passionate about and expanded on that idea. The hand puppets were constructed with little help from the mentors, and the students were able to fully express their ideas through construction paper, glue, and markers. They were engaged in both activities throughout. As each student would complete his/her puppets they would begin to act out their story, and often several students would use each of their characters to create new stories. This proved to be an unplanned but fun outcome, allowing the students to engage further in creativity and storytelling.

The activity proved to be a good follow up to the Theater activity from December, and we plan to continue to emphasize creativity and storytelling to enhance the children's engagement in learning and continue to foster strong relationships with the community.

El Barril Preparatoria Merit Scholarship

Objective: Increase access to higher education in El Barril as an investment in local human capital and a commitment to the opportunities available to the youth of the community who might otherwise be unable to attend preparatoria.

During this trip, the team's objective regarding the preparatoria merit scholarship initiative was to formally introduce it to the primary and secondary school teachers and to the community.

Accordingly, John and Lori, who both innovated the initiative and were consistently involved in education-related activities in the community during their two years as Baja Project consultants, met with Rogelio and Abraham, the primary and secondary school teachers. Hallie, who will

help to coordinate future details this initiative, was also present at this meeting. Rogelio and Abraham were both enthusiastic about the potential social and economic gains that this opportunity would surely motivate in the community. During the conversation, there was mention of state scholarship programs, which unfortunately are almost impossibly competitive, bureaucratic and very difficult to sustain if a student succeeds in receiving one. In comparison, the Baja Project scholarship initiative is justly targeted to the specific community of El Barril, and takes specific local characteristics into account to maximize its utility. Additionally, during this meeting, the teachers were established as the formal representatives of the initiative in the team's absence. Abraham, the current secondary teacher, while likely to be replaced in the near future because of the short cycle that visiting teachers are placed in El Barril, has mentioned working closely with Jonatán on his application essay and choosing a potential preparatoria that would fit his needs and interests.

During this meeting, the teachers also agreed to:

- (1) keep hard and electronic copies of the application forms for further dissemination;
- (2) answer parent and student questions as appropriate;
- (3) communicate with the team through Jesús, the community liaison for most email correspondence, when they encountered questions they could not answer;
- (4) collect scholarship applications from families who wished to apply but would not be present during the June trip.
- (5) provide the team with applicant's report cards prior to application period;
- (6) provide the team with a hard copy roster of primary and secondary students.

The team had coordinated a town meeting for the following afternoon and both teachers stated that they would be present. Abraham was the first community member to arrive at the meeting.

John presented the notion of the initiative and the team's motivation for creating it, and also went over application requirements (i.e. application form, personal essay, report card and approximate deadlines), selection criteria (grades), criteria for maintaining scholarship funding once in preparatoria and finally the rough expected distribution (\$325.00 USD 3-4 times/year). Subsequently, John passed out application forms to interested attendees. Following the meeting, John and Abraham met with Jonatán and his parents to answer questions that they had about the application process.

Abraham and John had also taken the time prior to the town meeting to directly encourage several families with children of the age to begin preparatoria as well as those already enrolled or eligible to apply for the scholarship and attend the community meeting. Finally, there was an encouraging level of community attendance at the meeting.

Looking forward, there are many steps remaining towards the successful implementation of the first merit scholarship. During and immediately following the team's June trip, the following tasks will need to be accomplished:

- (1) re-convene the community, to remind them of the application's deadline, which should be the date the team plans to return to San Diego (June 16th) or earlier;

- (2) Meet with interested families individually and assist them in the application process, during the first several days the team is in El Barril. Currently, there are three expected applicants.
- (3) Collect all completed application forms prior to departure.
- (4) Select the winning application based upon merit only, by the end of June.
- (5) Notify recipient family by the beginning of July, when first cash distribution will also be allocated.

The team, teachers and community members anxiously look forward to the selection of the first recipient, and of course to the positive impact that is expected to follow.

New Teaching Technology

Objective: Work with school teachers to improve their ability to use government funded technology to enhance the classroom.

Lori, Kim, John, Hallie and Shannon spoke with the primary school teacher about a new technology-based curriculum system (Enciclomedia) the government had installed at the school. The system includes an interactive projection screen, projector and computer. The teacher showed the group how the system works. He indicated that although the system is a great tool and well received by the students, the battery system that runs it overheats quickly, and he is unable to utilize the program for long periods of time. The group agreed to have Jeremy look at the solar powered battery system next time he is in El Barril to see if he can get it to work without overheating.

B. Fishing Cooperative

Objectives:

1. *To understand the recent changes made to the structure of the fishing coop;*
2. *To become familiar with accounting practices used by the coop; and*
3. *To further explore the feasibility of purchasing a vehicle and selling fish to new markets.*

Fishing activity at the time of the trip was transitioning from cabrilla and other inshore species targeted via both gill nets and traps, to cazon fished further offshore with gill nets. New nets for cazon provided on credit by Bahias de Ensenada (current buyer) were being sewn at most of the fishermen's homes. Shark season is expected to begin in late May to early June.

During this trip, Matthew, Nicola and Kim spent several hours at the fishing coop office. During this time they were able to observe the day-to-day operations of the coop, as well as have a meeting with the President and Treasurer of the coop (Francisco and Poli).

The coop has recently undergone structural changes and reorganized itself. The intent of the changes is to streamline the coop's operations and make the organization more efficient. As part of the reorganization, ten members were requested to leave the coop since they were not contributing members. The total number of members is now 22 individuals, 17 of whom are fishermen. The coop buys equipment and gasoline for the fishermen, which they then pay back

interest-free. Members with such debt to the coop pay 25% of their earnings as payment. All members pay a fee per kilo of fish sold to the coop for membership. From the conversation, it appears that presently 25% of the fishing profits are paid to the coop.

With regards to the accounting practices, team members were able to observe how the current accounting system works. It is a basic system of receipts and hand written records with some information transferred to computer by Delfino. It appears that the fishermen settle accounts approximately once a week whereby per trip catch receipts from the scale are tallied, gasoline and other expense receipts are tallied, required membership or debt payments are tallied, and the positive difference is paid out to the fishermen by check. Both Francisco and Poli shared with us rough estimates of the coop's current debts, and from the conversation the Baja Project gathers that the coop owes roughly 350,000 pesos (about \$35,000). This includes 60,000 pesos owed to the government for the icehouse and 180,000 pesos owed to the fish buyer for equipment such as outboard motors and nets. It seemed as though these are interest free debts and that the coop has no significant cash savings. Please note that these numbers are rough estimates, given to the team verbally. We will confirm these numbers with the men during the June trip.

Following the meeting with the coop, Baja Project members brainstormed on several ways to make the accounting system more efficient. Spreadsheets to better account for revenues and expenses were developed to be provided to Delfino with a short training session. However, Delfino fell sick and left for medical attention in Guerro Negro. It should be noted that the team feels that this is a sensitive topic and suggestions must be made carefully so as not to appear as intruders trying to "improve" their system. This issue will be discussed and simple ideas will be made to the coop during the June 2008 trip.

The team also brought up the subject of investing in a coop vehicle in order to sell directly to buyers in Ensenada and/or the United States. This will allow greater leverage for higher selling prices via competitive bidding for their products; the coop is currently forced to accept prices offered by their current buyer since they buy direct at the landing in El Barril where there are no other buyers. This has been brought up before, and although the coop administrators appear excited overall, there is also some hesitation. Specifically, the coop is hesitant to take on more debt before paying current bills and weary of their ability to export. In terms of export, the coop is fearful of an inability to supply significant quantities of first grade fish to U.S. markets while maintaining a domestic market for second grade fish. The team also learned that much of the fish market in Tijuana and Ensenada may be controlled by the mafia and therefore the coop leaders are nervous that cutting ties with their current buyer will close doors for the coop in Ensenada and Tijuana overall. The Baja Project believes that part of this anxiety about sales to new buyers can be alleviated by a joint trip to Ensenada and Tijuana with Francisco (including the coop's representative in Ensenada, Inocencio).

Although some initial market exploration was conducted in Ensenada in 2007, the team believes that another trip would be beneficial to assure Francisco and the coop that there are buyers for its products and that prices would be substantially higher than what they are currently offered were it to transport and sell the product directly to buyers in Ensenada. It is also important to confirm whether or not exclusively second grade fish can be sold to these buyers, and if so, at what prices. Previous cost benefit analysis for export shows that profit maximization occurs when all

first grade fish are sold to Chesapeake Fish Co. for export (buyer in Ensenada but export costs paid by seller), and all second grade fish are sold to domestic markets. Prices fluctuate widely, so a range will be required while later profit modeling with high and low estimates will be necessary. Compiling a new cost benefit analysis of purchasing a vehicle and selling direct to buyers (domestic vs. foreign vs. combined) should be compiled together with the coop leadership. This Ensenada/Tijuana trip is tentatively planned for June, following the team's trip to El Barril.

C. Aquaculture Exploration

Objective: Assess the feasibility of implementing an aquaculture pilot this summer and coordinate with CONANP for the feasibility study

During this trip, we moved forward with the organization of the leadership. Lino and Jesus both expressed interest in being involved with the project but are unable to take official leadership roles due to their responsibilities at La Mancha and CONANP, respectively. During a small meeting with Lino, Maria de Jesus, Jesus, Francisco, Rodrigo, Siria, and Elena it was decided that we would continue moving forward with the aquaculture project under the leadership of Francisco. This group undertook the goal of having a list of materials and prices ready by May 15th. This was to include all of the prices of materials needed to sow seeds in June. As of right now, we are still awaiting these figures. We do know that they have been in touch with Gustavo at the seed laboratory in Asuncion.

There was also a short visit from Celerino Montes from CONANP. He was stopping into the village to discuss work with Jesus and also took some time to express CONANP's continued dedication to advancing the aquaculture project. They are currently in the process of locating an aquaculture expert who can assist in all technical aspects of the project. It is also understood that this person will help assist in obtaining a license for the project. Given our group has already met with Celerino in Ensenada, coordination with CONANP on this project is both very possible, and likely to be fruitful. CONANP's access to technical expertise, involvement in El Barril, as well as government funds, could be important elements in creating a viable and sustainable aquaculture project.

It should be noted that during this trip we discovered that another person in the village had applied for assistance from CONANP for a similar aquaculture project. This person has not been in touch with us regarding his interest. During a meeting with the community, we made it clear that the intentions of this project are to assess the feasibility of such a project and upon its success, include other members of the community in its development.

D. Health Findings

Health Clinic

While the Baja Project was in town the Ministry of Health's mobile clinic made a routine visit to El Barril. We were fortunate to be able to meet the doctor and the community coordinator and speak with them about the services they offer the community. From the conversation with them it appears that they make monthly visits to the area and see as many people as possible in one day (at the community health clinic). This was a new mobile clinic, and the staff had not visited El Barril previously, but explained to the team that they are now scheduled to make routine visits. The community coordinator expressed an interest to begin working with the Health Committee, and he plans on conducting several workshops in the coming months to train the women in the committee about health-related issues.

E. Water Resources and Purification

Objective: To determine the current water situation in town and determine the best course of action.

The group spent the trip preparing the community for the upcoming groundwater study to be conducted by Jeremy in May. Shannon and Kim spoke with Luis about ensuring that the areas mapped were within the ejido land where the town had permission to build a new well.

Shannon and Kim spoke with the Women's group about their water use. They learned that water is generally obtained from the community well for cleaning purposes only. The well generally stays dry throughout the summer, at which point extra water is obtained from Poli or from Rancho El Barril. The community uses bottled water obtained in Guerrero Negro for their drinking water needs. The women expressed concern that without a better water supply to use for creating ice at the ice house, it would be difficult to launch additional fish product enterprises, as there is a general shortage of water available for ice. The women were concerned about the availability of water in El Barril and agreed that an additional source of water is needed.

At the community meeting, Hallie made an announcement about the upcoming groundwater survey. The announcement was met with smiles and applause by the community, and there was general agreement that this would be a good step in determining a better solution to the community's water needs than the status quo. The group plans to present the findings of Jeremy's study on the June trip and start working with the community to improve the quality and viability of the existing well and help the community form a plan to install a secondary well.

F. Community News & Developments

Town Hall Meeting

Objective: To update the community on our projects and have a farewell celebration for the second-year consultants.

The group met with the community to communicate updates on several community projects. In addition, the second-year students said farewell to the community. There were approximately 30 community members in attendance, plus the two school teachers, and the meeting lasted for approximately 30 minutes, with another 30 minutes of community socializing after. The group brought a snack for the community and everyone chatted and enjoyed the food once the official meeting concluded.

Nicola opened the meeting by welcoming the community members. Preston and Francisco gave an update on aquaculture. They indicated that the project is moving ahead with the help of CONANP and that there were plans to initiate a pilot test this summer. Hallie shared the news that Jeremy would be in El Barril in May to conduct a groundwater survey. This item generated the most positive response from the community. John announced the creation of scholarships for the community and passed out application forms to the families with children at or near the appropriate age. John told the community that future questions should be addressed to the school teacher, who also had extra application forms. There was excitement about the scholarship program.

Grupo Islas - Women's seafood products group

Objective: To assess the progress and readiness of Grupo Islas

One of the goals during this trip was to congregate the women's group, Grupo Islas, in order to assess how the group has evolved, their current organizational structure, current activities and future plans for the preparation of an array of preserved seafood products. As noted in previous trip reports, CONANP carried out a capacity building workshop with a group primarily of women who comprise what they name, Grupo Islas, in which they taught them how to prepare preserved seafood products such as chorizo, pickled fish and others. The goal of this workshop was of course to offer interested individuals new skills and a knowledge base that reflect characteristics of their local market and are thus highly appropriate for developing a new source of income.

Considering the potential success that Grupo Islas could have should they begin consistently producing their seafood products and supplying local markets with their goods, Hallie approached Claudia, the unofficial leader of Grupo Islas to arrange a meeting with her and the other women in the group. Kim, Lori and Shannon were able to follow up and meet with Claudia and the other members of the group to discuss their accomplishments, current activities and plans. They were informed that while the group has not held regular meetings recently, they have sustained their desire to have a running production operation and they have discussed the support and resources they might require in order for that to occur. Additionally, the group enthusiastically shared with Kim, Lori and Shannon that they had designed a logo for their

product. Along with their willingness and eagerness to meet with the Baja consultants, the innovation of the logo demonstrates that there is a promising future for their endeavors.

However, some issues that were touched upon during the meeting with the group were the insufficiency of funds to purchase packaging materials and to cover specific operating costs, uncertainty about where they could prepare their goods and of course, a lack of local networks of buyers with appropriate demand to coincide with the women's supply capabilities. Finally, the group can count on CONANP for certain technical assistance, but before they can attain such assistance, there are goals such as solidifying a budget that need to be met fairly independently.

The Baja Project team looks forward to continue working with Grupo Islas during the coming trips in order to assist them in several managerial concerns. Specific priorities will include: estimating their financial needs, establishing which resources they have access to for processing (i.e. what is their actual fish supply for processing purposes, will they have use of the icehouse or other location for processing, etc.) and eventually assess the feasible market for their products and make contacts with buyers.

Community Garden

Objective: To promote production and consumption of vegetables for the community.

We were pleased to see many healthy vegetables growing in the garden, including rows with squash, cilantro, tomatoes, and melons. When we left El Barril in December, we set up a gardening challenge to two groups in town. Both groups were led by secondary students, which also had adult support. Unfortunately the family of one of the two secondary student leaders had relocated to La Paz since the team's last trip in December, and thus, only one group was left to work in the garden. On that note however, it was encouraging to know that the student, who had been teamed up with one adult to work in the garden, began working with the other adult in the garden when his secondary student collaborator moved out of town. While we are mindful that the garden is being used by only part of one group, primarily in the same family, the result is that it is being effectively used to grow fresh vegetables for consumption. Additionally, the family that has been dedicating the most time to the care of the community garden has independently innovated interesting plans for its further success, such as setting up a cloth covering to protect plants from extreme weather and from the vultures that have tended to drag the drip system across the sprouting plants in an effort to access water. Hopefully the success this family is enjoying will encourage others to plant and care for other vegetables in the future.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Although short, the April 2008 trip to El Barril was quite an important one for the Baja Project team. During the trip, the Class of 2008 members said farewell to the community and the Class of 2009 took a leading role related to project activities. The aim of the team was to continue to focus on the main areas identified in previous reports: education, health, water resources, aquaculture exploration and collaboration with the fishing coop. In addition to these main areas, the team also continued to strengthen the communication with local government officials present in El Barril: CONANP representatives and mobile state healthcare providers.

Related to collaboration with the community, the team hosted a successful and well-attended town meeting. During the gathering, the team explained to the townspeople the finalized scholarship program and the upcoming UCSD water exploration survey trip. The team was pleased to see progress in the community garden, and felt that a number of community members have begun to see the benefits of growing vegetables themselves. Overall, the trip was positive in the sense that it reinforced to the team the willingness and enthusiasm of the community to participate in the various proposed projects. Although sometimes plans may take longer than initially anticipated, the Class of 2009 is confident that the community is on board with the main objectives of the project. Looking ahead, the team plans to remain focused on the aforementioned areas.

APPENDIX I. NEW CONTACTS

Mobile Clinic Contact Information (from Colonia Vicente Guerrero)

Ricardo Reza, Community Coordinator

616-108-1083

131045@gmail.com

Jorge Gaxiola, Doctor

New CONANP Contact Person in Bahia de los Angeles

Carlos Godínez Reyes, Deputy Director

APFF Islas del Golfo de California

Bahia de los Ángeles

Municipio de Ensenada, Baja California

(200) 124-9106

cgodinez@conanp.gob.mx

APPENDIX II. PICTURES



Hallie and Preston lead a computer activity.





Computer and craft activities with the children.



Showing off hard work.



Community Town Hall Meeting.





Lori and Hallie talk with Jesus at La Mancha.



Surveying the improvements in the community garden.



The group leaving El Barril.