



Mulegé, BCS. Spring Carnival promoted respect for the ocean.
(Photo: Debra Valov).

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Journalism to Raise Environmental Awareness

Grassroots Bulletin on Sustainable Development in Northwest Mexico

Editorial

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Disagreement reached on climate change

In the end, the peoples' voices went unheard and the power of large corporations dominated at the recent United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP21), held in Paris from November 30 to December 12, 2015.

That "climate change is a shared problem putting human existence at risk" was acknowledged by the almost 200 countries signing the Paris accord. In spite of this recognition, what was issued were vague, generalized and non-binding conclusions with no concrete timeframe for compliance. All parties even agreed to promote "green" production and consumption, although one of the principles for dealing with our climate problem is to actually decrease consumption and change the production system so as to stop using fossil fuels.

The accord, set to be signed on April 22, 2016, rests fundamentally on the promises made by nations which may or may not be fulfilled since they aren't mandatory. As such, the accord does not satisfy the so-called developing countries, indigenous peoples, and environmental organizations.

These latter groups seek instead to reduce the risks of climate change through a firm commitment to "hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2° C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5° C, recognising that this would significantly reduce risks and impacts of climate change".

This bad global agreement affects Mexico's great natural diversity which is experiencing brutal exploitation under a business model that looks to extract every last natural resource on and below ground, in the air and water, and from the original peoples. This is the notion of disposability in its highest form.

To put it in the words of Pope Francis in his Encyclical *Laudato Si* (Praise be to you), "Warming has effects on the carbon cycle. It creates a vicious circle which aggravates the situation even more, affecting the availability of essential resources like drinking water, energy and agricultural production in warmer regions, and leading to the extinction of part of the planet's biodiversity(...)"

"Highways, new plantations, the fencing-off of certain areas, the damming of water sources, and similar developments, crowd out natural habitats and, at times, break them up in such a way that animal populations can no longer migrate or roam freely. As a result, some species face extinction."

The above quote alludes to the entire planet and more personally to the Gulf of California to which the head of the Vatican might well have dedicated the following reflections: "Oceans not only contain the bulk of our planet's water supply, but also most of the immense variety of living creatures, many of them still unknown to us and threatened for

various reasons.

“What is more, marine life in rivers, lakes, seas and oceans, which feeds a great part of the world’s population, is affected by uncontrolled fishing, leading to a drastic depletion of certain species.

“Selective forms of fishing which discard much of what they collect continue unabated. Particularly threatened are marine organisms which we tend to overlook, like some forms of plankton; they represent a significant element in the ocean food chain, and species used for our food ultimately depend on them.”

In this issue of Melóncoyote are several notes on the efforts being made regarding responsible fishing, as well as the harmful health effects and irreversible environmental damage caused by pesticides, a subject on which Pope Francis touches when he points out how today’s technological advances often bring with them even more unexpected or mysterious consequences for their users.

The words of the leader of the Catholic Church also fell on deaf ears at the Paris meeting. Nor have they been heard by the residents of the Gulf of California region. Some farmers, ranchers, business people, and politicians have all ignored his call, in spite of the fact that on average, 80% of the area’s inhabitants are Catholic and their number has risen to slightly more than 8 million people, not counting those in the states of Arizona and California who also claim to be followers.

Corruption and deceit on the part of the rulers have plunged the country into an apparently unremitting maelstrom — from the war being waged against the unarmed populace by the forces of public order, organized crime syndicates, and corporations, to rulers of all levels of government that have disappeared 43 teachers from Ayotzinapa and thousands of victims in a worldwide scandal that has discredited the current federal government — all of this without anyone having been brought to justice.

Only citizen organizing can stand up to this madness, as is now happening in Sonora and Baja California Sur against the corrupt government of Guillermo Padrés — currently under investigation for money laundering and abuse of power — and the former La Paz City Council who are facing impeachment for granting rezoning permits in order to allow open pit mining operations in the Sierra la Laguna.

From this modest space we will continue to advocate for change towards means of production, exchange, and consumption that makes our coexistence with the earth and each other more harmonious. Stand with us!

Save our Oceans



Experts call it the

SILENT COLLAPSE

and although few can see it, we are the cause. Overfishing, ocean acidification, contamination, and climate change are destroying entire species. It's not just about the annihilation of incredible ancient species, but about the impacts on our weather patterns and life on dry land.

But we still have a small margin to act and 2015 could be the beginning of the change.
Save our Oceans

[Click to make a donation today.](#)



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Journalism to Raise Environmental Awareness

Grassroots Bulletin on Sustainable Development in Northwest Mexico

Mission

Why Melóncoyote?

Our project dates back to 1994, when “Journalism to Raise Environmental Awareness” (abbreviated PECE in Spanish) was formed. In 2004, PECE played a role in the founding of the national professional organization The Mexican Environmental Journalist’s Network. In 2005, when we started the first grassroots journalism project in the Gulf of California, our team chose the name Melóncoyote because it is a species emblematic of the region at the heart of our mission.

The Coyote Melon, known in Spanish as melón coyote or calabacilla (which includes the species *Cucurbita palmata*, *C. cordata*, *C. digitata* and *C. foetidissima*) is a wild perennial gourd that is resistant, versatile, beautiful, useful and native to the sandy soils that characterize the Gulf of California zone. The coyote melon is found in the region’s seven states: Baja California Sur, Baja California, California, Arizona, Sonora, Sinaloa, and Nayarit. A vine, Coyote Melon has an immense root that guarantees its survival against hard times while its long stems serve to anchor the soil in fragile areas.

The indigenous peoples of the area, bearers of the region’s traditional wisdom, describe the plant and how it is used. As medicine, it is bitter, but effective. As a musical instrument, it makes a beautiful rattle. Its seeds provide oil and a flour which contains a high level of protein. Its shell is ideal as a container for all matter of things. Because of all of these traits, and because it is an integral part of the food chain and one of the principal foods of the coyote, they named it “Coyote Melon”.

Our team of collaborators chose this name because it is a plant found throughout the region, and in doing so, we wanted to stress our intention to create a large-scale communications medium, capable of spreading (on a regional level) the news about efforts being made towards sustainability. With this symbolic name to represent our work, we are sending a clear message about our respect for the land and the sea, as well as for the ancestral cultures and customs of the region. We see the establishment of this medium for education and dissemination as something urgent, given the idiosyncrasies of the region. We have conceived this project as being an integral element of the environment, something positive like the Coyote Melon.

Faced with the challenges of growth in the region—a low population density, its recent political incorporation into the national government, a high degree of natural attraction and its proximity to the strong investment sector of the United States—we understand the implications of the pressures for development. Dealing with these challenges and pressures will require informed citizens who have the chance to participate in the decisions that affect their land, water, air, biodiversity and their future. We invite others to join with us, to participate in building this medium and to fight for a stable future for the region.

All work on behalf of Melóncoyote is voluntary.

Fishackathon International



International competition calls for marine biologists, programmers and designers to create a mobil application that delivers scientific data on the state of marine resources. Collaborate in the development of responsible fishing practices.

[Click here.](#)

<http://www.fishackathon.co/>



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Journalism to Raise Environmental Awareness

Grassroots Bulletin on Sustainable Development in Northwest Mexico

Farmworkers face toxic chemical exposure from export crops

By Talli Nauman*

SAN QUINTÍN

It's the afternoon before Children's Day. The women are sitting around a big enamel pot, hulling dried kernels of lime-soaked corn for the traditional posole to celebrate the occasion.

"A gal who lives nearby gave us the corn. She's going to give us a chicken in solidarity," says Gerardo Sánchez López who accompanies them under the shade of a makeshift tent alongside the hot dusty main road through the city.

The solidarity is for the camped-out agricultural workers' demand of higher wages and better conditions in the San Quintin Valley, home to an ever burgeoning tomato and berry farm-export industry.

By this date, April 29, the people under the tent and thousands like them from the fields along the Trans-Peninsular Highway have been on a wildcat strike for six weeks, blocking traffic, marching and boycotting the U.S. companies and subsidiaries that employ them.

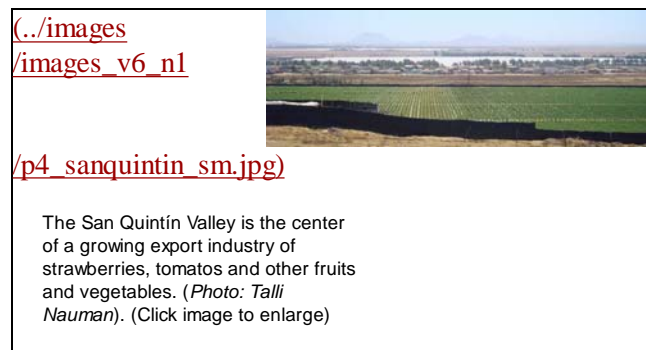
The movement, by members and international supporters of the Alianza de Organizaciones Nacional, Estatal y Municipal por la Justicia Social en el Valle de San Quintin, has achieved front-page news coverage and a portion of its demands.

For example, employers have agreed to stop sexual harassment and now are checking job applicants' birth certificates to make sure nobody younger than 15 years old is toiling in the fields, says farmworker Antonia Cruz.

Nonetheless, only a 15 percent raise for some and insufficient job protections for all were achieved in the month of struggle before the breakdown of bargaining with company and state negotiators, she laments.

She and her coworkers in the strawberry fields say they make \$6.61 a day. They literally work from sun-up to sun-down. They must work on Sundays and holidays or get docked \$18. They receive no pay-increase for overtime, contrary to federal law. They want \$13 a day and the right to days off, just like all other employees have by law.

"We're waiting for responses favorable to the farmworkers from the government and the companies," Cruz tells Meloncoyote. "They addressed the easiest things but haven't



wanted to raise wages like we have been asking.”

Better health and safety conditions are among the guarantees that have not been so easy to achieve, she says. While some employers provide company doctors, clinics and exercise rooms, others don't even make social security contributions.

“You have to work even if you have a cold and are coughing,” Cruz complains. “They don't pay you sick leave.”

Agrochemicals are a big concern for the workers. “They fumigate you with tractors.” After handling blackberries and strawberries, “you break out in disgusting blemishes,” Cruz says.

“The chemicals that they put on the plants are very harmful to women, especially when they are pregnant,” Sanchez adds

“The bad thing is that we don't know the chemicals or even their names,” Cruz says. “I only hear the word Tamaron.

Tamaron is Bayer's brand of methamidophos, which is an organophosphate, belonging to the same chemical family as nerve gas, first developed as a weapon in biological warfare.

Because this insecticide can cause nervous and respiratory damage it is subject to the Prior Informed Consent procedures of the UN Rotterdam Convention under which signatory nations must formally approve or disallow imports based on products' chemical risk.

Classified as a “highly hazardous poisonous substance” by the U.N. World Health Organization, the insecticide is outlawed in Great Britain and China; its use is restricted in the United States and India, among other countries.

Due to its high toxicity it can be fatal if inhaled or absorbed through the skin of farmworkers, domestic and wild animals.

For the health and welfare of workers and the general population, the WHO recommends handling and application of methamidophos “be entrusted only to competently supervised and well-trained applicators”, taking adequate safety measures.

According to WHO guidelines, protective clothing is a requirement; it should be laundered thoroughly and separately from family clothing.

Unprotected workers should be kept out of treated areas for 48 hours. Regularly exposed workers should receive appropriate monitoring and health evaluations, according to the organization.

However, Cruz says, no training, protective gear, waiting periods or observation are provided to farmworkers in the San

[../images/images_v6_n1/p4_driscolls.jpg](#)



While some employers offer health care, doctors and recreation, others don't even contribute to the Social Security system. (Photo: Tali Nauman).

[../images/images_v6_n1/p4_banners.jpg](#)



Striking farmworkers only managed to win a 15% pay raise and insufficient labor protections in the month of struggle before the collapse of negotiations with growers and authorities. (Photo: Dahl McLean). (Click image to enlarge)
Signs: "Don't betray your children's future, fight for it." "No to exploitation of farmworkers."

Quintin Valley. “Those who can’t stand it, put a bandana over their face,” she says.

Cruz’ mother, who hailed from the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, like many of the other farm laborers in the San Quintin Valley, died of exposure to the agrochemicals on the farms here, according to doctors.

“They discovered my mother had leukemia,” Cruz says. “She worked a long time in the fields, and they told her that had a lot to do with the cancer.”

As a child, Cruz recalls, her mother often “had no time to bathe” and wash away the chemicals. (“no tenia tiempo para banarse”). Cruz’ employer does not provide shower rooms, so she showers at home, she says.

Labor union representation, which is required by federal law in Mexico, has failed the farmworkers in garnering protections. “If we have a union, they never have told us that we have a union. The company pays it off,” she says.

Yet Cruz continues to work in the fields, she says, because she has no schooling to help her get a better job. A lot of single mothers in the fields can’t send their children to school because they are needed to work at home or in the fields, too, she notes.

However, her husband works in the fields, so between the two of them, they make it possible for their children, aged 15, 11, and four, to attend school and preschool.

“At least my children can study,” she says.



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Grassroots Bulletin on Sustainable Development in Northwest Mexico

The Independencia Aqueduct unleashes unforeseeable consequences

*By Miguel Ángel Torres**

MEXICO CITY

On December 16th 2015, the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) announced that they had issued a recommendation to Sonora governor Claudia Pavlovich Arellano in which it rules that compensation be awarded to Yaqui tribal leaders Mario Luna and Fernando Gutierrez for the violation of their right to self-determination and due process.

The press release points out that the two were imprisoned for a year, and that the agent from the Public Prosecutor subjected them to criminal proceedings without first having verified their standing as tribal leaders.

The CNDH determined that the compensation amount would be established in coordination with the Executive Commission for Victim Assistance. The two leaders would also be enrolled in the National Victim Registry so that they could access the Fund for Comprehensive Relief, Assistance and Reparations established under the General Law for Victims.

At the same time, the commission is asking the Federal Attorney General to provide classes for state public servants to teach about the customs and practices of indigenous people in general, and emphasizing the relevance of the right of indigenous people to unimpeded self-determination and application of their own system of standards to resolve internal conflicts.

It should be remembered that Luna, leader and spokesperson for the Yaqui tribe, was detained arbitrarily without a legal warrant on September 11th 2014, and Gutierrez a few days later, by undercover agents of the Federal Ministerial Police, and then imprisoned for more than a year in a maximum security prison in Hermosillo.

They were accused of stealing a car, but civil society organizations believe the detentions took place in a context of Yaqui opposition to the plundering of water from the Rio Yaqui, the lifeblood of their community and vital to their survival. The water's diversion was made possible by the Independencia Aqueduct, built by the former Guillermo Padrés government, which is now accused, among other crimes, of money laundering and diversion of public funds.

Padrés' goal was to redirect the water to the thirsty state capital of Hermosillo which is located in a desert and has historically been supplied by the Río Sonora. The latter was

Mario Luna (left), official spokesperson for the Yaqui tribe and water rights activist, speaks with Meloncoyote at the Yaqui tribal headquarters in Vicam. The Sonora state government imprisoned him and Fernando Gutiérrez for a year in a maximum security prison, in violation of their rights, according to the National Human Rights Commission ruling. (Photo: Meloncoyote Archives).



contaminated in 2014 by a heavy metal spill from the Buenaventura del Cobre copper mine in Cananea. This environmental crime is still unresolved and Grupo de Mexico, responsible for the spill, has gone unpunished.

Contamination, discrimination, criminalization, and the unchecked rise in the cost of water are other unforeseeable consequences of the governmental theft of Yaqui water, say analysts.

Anthropologist and scholar of Yaqui history and culture, Raquel Padilla concedes that “they convinced us (Hermosillo residents) that the Independencia Aqueduct is crucial. Huge billboards, radio announcements, TV commercials, street performances and, above all, the unofficial voice of the media such as *El Imparcial*, all support water terrorism, and consequently to the spread of ethnic terrorism.

According to what Agua de Hermosillo, the state water utility, says on its website, ‘a large percentage of Hermosillo residents, even those who call themselves, or are known as, activists do not support the Yaqui fight to defend their river’, absurdly arguing that the Yaqui are, or were PRI party members. Others are afraid that their taps at home will stop flowing. They haven’t realized that the Aqueduct will end at the industrial park and they haven’t noticed that Heineken, Ford, the cement and bottling plants are practically the only ones to benefit, given that just 7% of residents, people like you and me, are getting this water in our homes,” Padilla concludes.

At the same time the municipal government and the state congress approved an increase in water rates, including a 60% raise for domestic use, arguing that the government water department is bankrupt and because their new water treatment plant has come online. The new treatment plant is supposed to produce water that is clean enough to be used for a wide range of needs such as agriculture, livestock, industry, construction, tourism and recreation. Depending on supply, demand and the existing distribution infrastructure, it could also be used for watering roadways, gardens, sports fields and the like.

The public reaction was immediate, the increase being met with great opposition, and even more after news got out that the company would be restructured in preparation for its privatization by investors from Mexico City and Spain.

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Call made for end to burning of asparagus residue in Caborca

*By Miguel Ángel Torres**

CABORCA

Although the burning of agricultural crop residue causes severe harm to both human and environmental health, it continues to be common practice across the country and one which no competent authorities are addressing.

[A petition \(https://www.change.org/p/alto-a-la-quema-de-rama-de-espárrago-en-caborca-sonora-caborcagobierno?recruiter=18578174&rp_sharecordion_checklist=control\)](https://www.change.org/p/alto-a-la-quema-de-rama-de-espárrago-en-caborca-sonora-caborcagobierno?recruiter=18578174&rp_sharecordion_checklist=control) to put an

end to the practice of burning asparagus stalks in Caborca that layout the problem in detail is circulating on the social networks via Change.org. It is signed by David Silva Bonales and directed to: Municipal President Karina García Gutiérrez; Sonora Public Health Secretary Gilberto Ungson Beltrán; representative from the Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fish and Food (Sagarpa) Secretariat Jorge Guzmán Nieves; Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resource representative in Sonora Gustavo Adolfo Claussen Iberri; and the Sonora Governor Claudia Pavlovich Arellano.

“For the last 25 years, during the coldest months of December and January, they have been burning more than 13 thousand acres of esparagus stalks around Caborca, Sonora. During the month long burning, mi family and I suffer constant headaches, sore throats, red eyes, persistent allergies. It’s also impossible to play sports. And we aren’t the only ones. In the region there are enormous columns of smoke from these fires that can even be seen on satellite images. The city is blanketed by smoke and this is what we are all breathing.”

According to one study published by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the burning of these residues releases dioxins, listed as persistent bioaccumulative toxicants (PBTs) because they contain chlorine and residues of pesticides absorbed into the tissues of the leaves and stems, as well as beomg the source of 40% of the CO₂, 32% of CO, 20% of suspended particulate matter, and 50% of the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons emitted into the atmosphere on a worldwide basis.

These substances contribute to climate change because they contain greenhouse gases and other short-lived contaminants like soot, which cause severe harm to human health even in very small amounts. For example, effects are seen as: reduced sperm count in male infants and children; changes in human thyroid hormone levels; neurological effects from in-utero fetal exposure; low testosterone levels; and reproductive problems

Environmental regulations are still being ignored a year after Sindia Anel Gutiérrez Saldaña (right), head of Sagarpa in Sonora, responded to David Silva (red vest) and the members of the NGO [Sonora Transparente A.C.](http://www.sonoratransparente.com/) (<http://www.sonoratransparente.com/>) that authorities should unite with growers and victims of the burning of asparagus crop residue. (Photo: Julio César Ortega Quiroz y Mora). (Photo: Julio César Ortega Quiroz y Mora).



in women such as decreased fertility, prolonged menstrual cycles and early menopause, among others.

In Caborca the asparagus growers argue that the burning is necessary to guarantee the high quality of the product. Nonetheless, Peru and China, the largest producers of asparagus in the world do not follow this practice. Neither does Spain. In Mexico's state of Guanajuato, another big asparagus producer, they don't burn the residue either. It has been shown scientifically that the burning is not necessary in the growers fields, but they refuse to stop the practice.

[The petition \(https://www.change.org/p/alto-a-la-quema-de-rama-de-espárrago-en-caborca-sonora-caborcagobierno?recruiter=18578174&rp_sharecordion_checklist=control\)](https://www.change.org/p/alto-a-la-quema-de-rama-de-espárrago-en-caborca-sonora-caborcagobierno?recruiter=18578174&rp_sharecordion_checklist=control) that contains over 17,000 signatures states, "We have spoken to the authorities but have not received any real help. We have been fighting for more than 10 years. Even the Municipal President Karina García Gutiérrez has asked us to demonstrate that the smoke is harmful. It should be pointed out that she is a biochemist, and that she should surely know that it is, since the asparagus burning emits large quantities of CO₂ into the atmosphere and disperses millions of particles harmful to the respiratory system, all which also does considerable harm to the environment."

With the asparagus industry, what Caborca gets in return is the environmental contamination since 95% of the economic benefits leave bound for the United States. David Silva concludes, "Because of this, I am asking the Cabora Municipal President to prohibit the burning of asparagus stalks for the well-being of the local population whose health is at constant risk, without mentioning the high incidence of cancer that has exploded in the region in recent years, as well as asthma and acute respiratory illnesses."

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Agrochemicals in Yaqui Valley threaten farm workers, fields and consumers

*By Ana Cristina Campoy Inostrosa, Karla Alejandra Villa Coronado, Annel Zavala Ramírez, Adrián Arturo Arciga Palafox, Juan Carlos Marruffo Valenzuela, Edwin García, Daniela Zapien, and Haralet De Montserrat Curiel Soto**

CIUDAD OBREGÓN

At Campo Bórquez in the municipality of Bacum, farm workers from southern Mexico toil to make a living for themselves and their families in the cultivation of asparagus, a crop destined for export. However, year after year they are exposed to pesticides because the neighboring wheat farmer uses chemicals that are harmful on contact with eyes and skin.



Laborers wait for the employee bus at the end of the day. (Photo: Alfredo Acedo).

"They fumigate right next to us," says agronomist Francisco García, manager of operations and control at La Realidad packing company. "We don't know what they are using."

Around 1,000 people work on the 5,000 metric tons of asparagus harvested annually from the nearly 10,000 hectares under cultivation on this Yaqui Valley farm.

The company provides both medical and economic benefits. They offer optical and orthodontic services. They operate a small general health clinic and have a computer room that is open to workers and their families. There is even a baseball team and judo.

The beneficiaries of all of this don't have any idea how much risk to their health or their families future they face. Nor does anyone know how much the chemicals from next door affect the exported crop.

"If they aren't careful with the pesticides next door, they can affect the asparagus farms and in turn the consumer," claims researcher Alfredo Acedo.



Workers at the Campos Borquez packing company wash and box asparagus. (Photo: Alfredo Acedo).

A large sign in the neighboring field says "Malathion", announcing the use of a chemical classified by 400 member organizations of the Red de Acción en Plaguicidas (Pesticide Action Network) as among the top "worst 20" because they are especially harmful to children.

According to the Network, it can affect the brain and nervous system, cause respiratory tract irritation, impact reproduction and development, contribute to obesity and diabetes, as well as cancer in children.

García emphasizes that the incidence of cancer in the Yaqui Valley is high because of the amount of agrochemicals used, including many of those banned in other places.

**Participants in the workshop "Bilingual Grassroots Journalism for Sustainable Development",
Cobach 3 High School, Ciudad Obregon.*

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Grey cloud darkens school

By Luz Carmen Osuna*

CIUDAD OBREGÓN

Students at Cobach 3 High School (Colegio de Bachilleres 3) in Ciudad Obregón suffered from allergic reactions, coughs and other reactions after unexpectedly being bathed in a cloud of unknown chemicals in the middle of recess. The foul smelling cloud emanated from a crop duster fumigating a neighboring field over a period of about 90 minutes.

Urban sprawl has invaded agricultural areas, resulting in residents increasingly being exposed to the health risks posed by pesticides. As if this weren't bad enough, experts recognize that there are increased health risks due to the application of chemicals across the entire agricultural zone surrounding the city.

"They fumigate right next to us; in the Yaqui Valley there are increased levels of cancer. We don't even know what is being applied, but we do know that they use amides (organic compounds) that are prohibited elsewhere except in the Yaqui Valley", says Francisco García, farmer from Campo Bórquez, located in the valley.

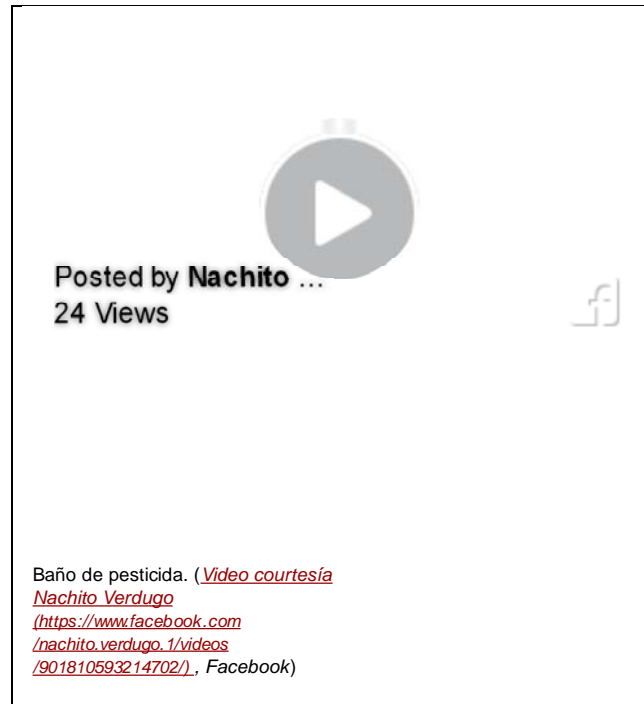
He explains that as a farmer, he always has to be alert since his neighbors, wheat farmers, use fumigants that put the production of his crops at risk. He says it's very important to have a good relationship with his other neighbors, especially with the residents and nearby schools.

According to a poll carried out by Cobach 3 after the crop duster incident, of the ten students interviewed at least four said they suffered health problems due to the pesticide release.

Administrators and teachers expressed their intentions to not only stop fumigation during school hours but to put an end to the practice altogether.

*Student, Cobach 3 High School

Students show that urban organic agriculture is an alternative to the use of agrochemicals



Studenta at Cobach 3 High School in Ciudad Obregón check out the results of their pumpkin crop in the school garden. (Photo: Alfredo Acedo).

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Ponguinguiola environmental educators promote reading, gardening and recycling

*By Melissa Guadalupe Velásquez Domínguez, Kevin Oswaldo López Valenzuela, Kevin Medina Moran, Patricia Guadalupe Muñoz Ochoa, Ivonne Yoselin Muñoz Piña, María Teresa Rosas Pérez, Manuel Leyva Munguía and Alejandra Cervantes Espinoza**

CIUDAD OBREGÓN

April 14, 2015 – Ponguinguiola, a local NGO dedicated to environmental education, has been serving this city for 10 years.

Outside their facilities examples of urban organic gardening and a greenhouse can be seen, as well as samples of rainwater catchment systems which are put to use to water the crops. Those in charge of the project grow carrots, celery, tomatoes, onions and other types of vegetables in order to demonstrate the feasibility of growing healthy foods in the back yard.

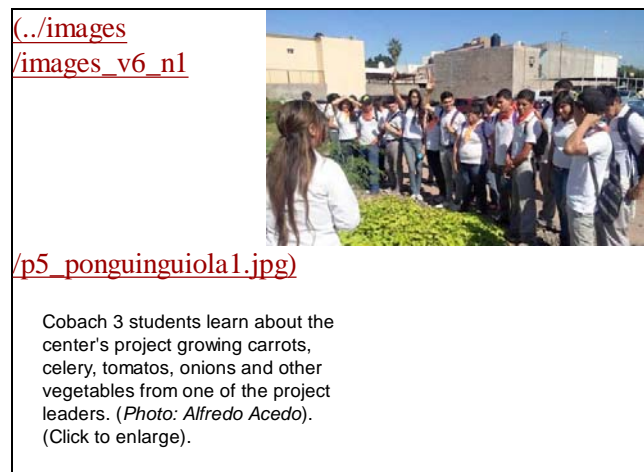
Inside, there is a library open to the public with sections for adults, adolescents children and even babies. The library serves as a foundation of their programs promoting reading.

Throughout the year, they get youth from the schools and other segments of society involved in environmental education activities.

In the rear of the building is a storage area with a cargo platform for trucks that serves as a "bank" for the trade in recyclable materials. The organization sustains itself through donations to the bank - of paper, cardboard, metal and other products - with the donors receiving a receipt that they can use to receive tax deductions. The materials received are in turn sold to recycling companies. Over time, all parties contribute to the conversion of tons of materials otherwise destined to pollute the environment into useful items.



Students from Cobach 3 High School in Ciudad Obregon inspect the storage bins during a visit to a recycling bank that receives donated materials and sells them to recycling companies. (Photo: Alfredo Acedo).



[../images/images_v6_n1](#)

[/p5_ponguinguiola1.jpg](#)

Cobach 3 students learn about the center's project growing carrots, celery, tomatoes, onions and other vegetables from one of the project leaders. (Photo: Alfredo Acedo). (Click to enlarge).

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Voices raised to halt the Las Cruces Dam project

*By Sumar – Voces por la Naturaleza A.C.**

MEXICO CITY

In the first trimester of 2015, representatives from the Intercommunity Council of the San Pedro River Basin in Nayarit met with Francisco Salvador López Brillo, president of the Fishing Commission for the Mexican senate, as well as two other senators, to exchange information and sign an agreement

Those who stand to be directly impacted by the Las Cruces hydroelectric project ([see](#)

[project map \(http://www.meloncoyote.org/images/images_v5_n1](http://www.meloncoyote.org/images/images_v5_n1)

[/p04_nayarit_canal_eng.jpg](#)) along with the Senator then gave a press conference to announce the accord that will cancel the project located in the San Pedro Mezquital riverbed which is promoted by the Federal Electric Commission.

The dam would see the demise of the last free-flowing river in northwest Mexico and the country's seventh longest river. The source of sustenance for the state's central region, it is also the principal source of fresh water in the southern part of Durango state.

According to a study by the World Wildlife Fund and the Gonzalo Río Arronte Foundation, putting an end to the river's seasonal floods and the nutrients they provide to the valleys and coastal lagoons would have a tremendous impact on agriculture, livestock, fishing, and tourism which directly benefits almost 10,000 producers and generates 1.297 million pesos.

**NGO working to unite voices and actions for the benefit of the inhabitants and the natural treasures of the Gulf of California.*

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According to the signatories of an agreement in opposition to the dam reached in the the Mexican Senate chambers, the negative impacts of the Las Cruces Hydroelectric project will be felt in the Gulf of California because it will affect the National Wetlands and other coastal wetlands in Nayarit, the principal nurseries for shrimp. (Photo: Courtesy of Sumar).



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Wanted: Sustainable fishing in the National Wetlands

PHOTO ESSAY

TEACAPÁN

*Photos by Carlos Eduardo Simental Crespo**

In the National Wetlands, the most extensive mangrove forest on Mexico's Pacific coast, nine fishing cooperatives and five concessionaires along with technical help from the NGOs Sumar, Redes and Mar Bermejo, are coming together to eliminate harmful practices and to help restore the fisheries on which their economy depends.

[\(../images/images_v6_n1/p6_recuperemos.jpg\)](#)

While both Mexican and international fisheries are on the brink of collapse due to overfishing and pollution fisherman in the forefront of conservation in the state of Sinaloa endorse the initiative known as PescAvante. *(Click on the image to enlarge).*



[\(../images/images_v6_n1/p6_purina.jpg\)](#)

A campaign was launched to educate the public and promote adherence to federal law NOM 064 which prohibits, among other things, chumming, use of trawl nets and codends (or cod ends, the tapered end of a trawl net), as well as toxic agents such as cyanide. *(Click on the image to enlarge).*



[../images/images_v6_n1/p6_radio.jpg](#)

They spread their message to their colleagues on the radio.



[../images/images_v6_n1/p6_teacapan1.jpg](#)

On August 28th, local representatives from the Intercooperative Committee (composed of six fishing cooperatives and five commercial fishing permit holders) and the NGO offering technical assistance met in Teacapán. *(Click on the image to enlarge).*



[../images/images_v6_n1/p6_ruedaprensa.jpg](#)

On November 27th, members of PescAvante held a press conference in Escuinapa to unveil their initiative which is designed to promote respect of fishing areas designated



as “under restoration” and of no-catch refuges. (Click on the image to enlarge).



[\(../imagenes/imagenes_v6_n1/p6_sinaloa6.jpg\)](#)

On December 14, the Sinaloan participants from PescAvante met with three fishing cooperatives from Nayarit at the National Wetlands in order to strengthen their unity in the responsible fishing initiative. (Click on the image to enlarge).



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Real estate megaproject Tres Santos bows to authorities

*By Miguel Ángel Torres**

PUNTA LOS LOBOS

Results are still not in from a meeting held by business owners and fishers from Punta Lobos with legislators and representatives from municipal, state and federal agencies. The aim was to address how to legally resolve the theft of land and loss of beach access by MIRA Companies.

The US investor showed up overnight, claiming to be the property owner. It has begun work on the Tres Santos mega project on ejido, communal and even private property, creating socio-environmental conflicts between a growing number of residents.

In constant conflict with governmental representatives, investors and even their own neighbors, those defending the traditional use of the land have almost always ended up in jail and, in the worst cases, killed.

While President Enrique Peña Nieto (EPN) was just a short distance away in Los Cabos inaugurating infrastructure projects, commercial centers and hotels, in Punta Lobos, located right next door to the “Magical Town” of Todos Santos, fishers were protesting against the real estate megaproject and a property owned by the University of Colorado which, for the time being, have blocked their traditional access to the beach and their source of work.

Baja California Sur is a place of great natural wealth, with rock art, fresh water oases, marine and land animals, and unique vegetation. It is also a place where the ocean meets the desert and therefore a place of unique landscapes found nowhere else in the world. It is this natural beauty and its treasures that fuel the economy through tourism, as well as fishing since a large and varied number of species suited for human consumption ply the surrounding waters of the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of California.

This economic model is being altered by the explosion and imposition of new projects that are incompatible with the model. Instead, they result in plunder, displacement, marginalization, and poverty which has never been eradicated. To give an example, in spite of being a world class tourist destination, Los Cabos suffers from garbage collection problems, deficient public services, and the destruction of mangroves that are necessary as a first line of defense against tropical storms and hurricanes.

Among other new, outside investors are not only the giant real estate projects but also an open-pit gold mine, an underwater mine, and other infrastructure and services projects that will privatize the beaches.

Fishers from Punta Lobos hold their Christmas party in the public road to maintain the blockade that prevents the private company access to the beach. Los pescadores de Punta Lobos hicieron posada de Navidad en la vía pública para mantener el plantón que impida a la empresa privada el acceso a la playa. (Foto: Cortesía Salvemos Punta Lobos).



EPN himself admitted it when he inaugurated the toll road joining San José del Cabo with Cabo San Lucas, declaring: “while the principle engine for economic development in Baja California Sur is tourism, there also needs to be attention to a variety of necessities that permit this activity to grow, consolidate, and bring well-being to the state’s residents.

EPN promised to strengthen this type of activity when he affirmed that his administration is prepared to work with the state government to promote new investments like Loreto. “I want to pledge that we make a shared effort, join forces, and together work on how we can move development forward in this beautiful place, maximize the development here in this place that is so beautiful and relevant to the state of Baja California Sur, [a place] that has, without doubt, enormous potential,” he said.

Mira Companies boasts that: “We are thrilled about MIRA’s rapid growth in the Mexican market. Each new project is an opportunity to prove that we are innovators that provide our investors with a strong sense of security that by means of a consistent demand for outperformance in our investments we are the best stewards of their capital.”

But the facts contradict him. Behind all the hype of the highway’s inauguration were farmers from Ejido San Jose demanding payment of approximately US\$2 million that they are still owed for having ceded 50 acres of ejido land to the project.

Los Cabos is one of the municipalities most recently affected by the arrival of new investors. Among the notable ones are: Tres Santos, which is displacing fishers in Punta Lobos, threatens the cultural integrity of Todos Santos, and infringes on the Federal Terrestrial Maritime Zone (Zofemat).

The project will cover a planned area of 1023 acres for the construction of 11,000 hotel rooms, a number which would house a population greater than that of Todos Santos. It would also infringe on part of the Zofomat (or federal terrestrial marine zone for it's Spanish abbreviation) which includes the 20 meter contiguous strip of shoreline, and is considered to be in the public domain and designated for unimpeded, common access. Salvemos Punta Lobos, who are defenders of the area, point out that the Zofomat is determined through the maximum high tide marks.

According to the Regulations for the Use and Exploitation of Territorial Waters, Navigable Channels, Beaches, Federal Terrestrial Maritime Zone and Reclaimed Coastal Land, issued by the Federal Attorney's Office for Environmental Protection (PROFEPA), Article 7 establishes that “beaches and the federal terrestrial maritime zone may be enjoyed by every person without limitations or restrictions.”

And Subsection 2 of the same document points out, according to Carlos Ibarra, reporter for SDPNoticias.com that: “the construction and installation of elements and buildings that impede the free passage along the zone is prohibited, with exception to those that are approved by the Secretariat and which follow urban and architectural norms, as well as those laid out in the General Law of Ecological Equilibrium and Protection of the Environment (LGEEPA)

MIRA Companies is also accused of destroying mangroves, and of operating outside of environmental and national laws. For example by trespassing and contracting with foreign security personnel, presumably from the United States, who can be seen on a video released by Salvemos Punta Lobos trying to intervene in the fishers’ blockade.

Established to deny the company access to the beach, the blockade has resulted in the

company's willingness to open negotiations with sights set on solving the conflict. All work on the megaproject has been suspended.

At a meeting held October 30th the the midst of the blockade, company representative Beatriz Ledesma and members of the Punta Lobos fishing cooperative, agreed to hold a public meeting on November 11th in the Todos Santos town square. Invited would be representatives from all of the public institutions involved in the project with decision making authority, the company, other residents affected by the project, and the fishers.

At the same time, local representatives of all political parties presented a Points of Agreement document to Congress in which they ask that the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources issue a report on the development projects. They asked that the following be provided: information on how much and which mining projects are operating within the state; what companies have applications that are being processed; and the current status of each and every one of the applications.

The representatives enquired about other project applications currently being reviewed where there might be negative environmental impacts, "such as marina projects, given that these can do great harm to the environment when there are attempts to locate them in inappropriate areas. Such is the case in La Paz, where there is an attempt being made to build a marina just 65 yards from Playa el Corumuel which is going to have an impact on that ecosystem."

At the national level more than 300 human rights and environmental defense organizations agreed to join forces with the goal of preventing mega projects that only fuel conflicts between inhabitants and the Capitol over large areas of the national territory. Their demand is nothing new.

According to a 2012 complaint filed before the [Permanent People's Tribunal Chapter Mexico \(http://www.tppmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/International-letter-PPTLMfinal1.pdf\)](http://www.tppmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/International-letter-PPTLMfinal1.pdf), investors are involved in: water and communication projects, oil and gas pipelines, refineries, petrochemical and chemical factories, wind projects, paper mills, sugar mills, and cement and electric plants; the exploitation and extraction of minerals and other substances considered national resources under federal mining laws and regulations on nuclear materials in Article 27 of the Constitution; toxic and radioactive waste treatment, confinement or disposal installations; logging operations aimed at the extraction of tropical forest and old growth species; changing of land use and zoning regulations in temperate and tropical forests and arid zones; industrial parks where highly dangerous activities will be carried out; real estate developments that affect coastal ecosystems; construction projects and activities within wetlands, mangrove, lagoons, rivers, lakes, and estuaries, as well as on their shores and within federal zones.

The complaint also mentions construction projects and other activities in the nation's natural areas supposedly protected from exploitation, and fishing activities, aquaculture projects, farming, or ranching that can increase the risk to threatened species and cause damage to the environment.

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Periodismo Para Elevar la Conciencia Ecológica

Boletín Ciudadano Sobre el Desarrollo Sustentable del Noroeste Mexicano

Mining impacts water and health: Voices from Baja California Sur

*By Mohamed Pérez, Lizbeth Casas and Víctor Moranchel **

SAN ANTONIO

To date, attempts continue to set up an open pit mining operation in the Sierra La Laguna Biosphere Reserve without first obtaining the required permits.

The plan is to create large fresh water wells for use in the mine operations. The gold they hope to extract could lead to numerous illnesses, deforestation of a large part of the area, threats to animal species, water contamination, and strong climate changes.

The Sierra La Laguna Biosphere Reserve is a protected area loaded with biodiversity, with many endemic plant and animal species. At least 17 plant species are currently considered to be endangered.

According to Jesús Quiñones, the Biosphere's Administrative Director, the Reserve has only had changes in land use (re-zoning) approved for 101 of its 277,838 acres, the lowest rate of habitat change in the country. The rate of change is determined by comparing satellite images of the area over the years.

Manuel Aguilar, a reserve biologist, points out that among a variety of endemic and endangered species sheltered by the reserve, Mexican pinyon (*Pinus cembroides* subsp. *lagunae*) is found exclusively here.

Another notable species is the Palo de Arco (*Tecoma stans* var. *stans*) a shrub used traditionally in both hunting and house construction.

The vegetation would be wiped out in the immediate area, affecting the local hydrological cycle which plays an important role in ensuring both the supply of water and a balanced climate.

The National Commission on Protected Natural Areas refused the mining permit in a buffer zone of 865 acres, stating that because of its ecological and climatic importance as



Manuela Rivera Cota and Adolfo de la Peña Arámburo

well as it being the principal source of fresh water for southern Baja California Sur, the Reserve should not be the site of a large project like Los Cardones mine.

Invecture and its subsidiary company Zapal decided to suspend further attempts to obtain the necessary permits to complete the project upon learning of the permit's rejection in September 2014. Nevertheless, just 22 miles away, Pitalla Mining Company, a subsidiary of Argonaut Gold, is working to get a similar project underway.

This company is trying to win over the people of the small town of San Antonio by offering educational scholarships and household electronics, but so far to no avail.

There have been many demonstrations against the project. José Luis López López, doctor and member of the civil coalition Citizens Front for Water and Life (Frente Ciudadano a Favor de Agua y la Vida) states "Contaminating the water which is needed for everyday use is too great a risk to take. Illnesses such as cancer are not things with simple solutions but rather involve a process of slow death with great suffering.

Communities such as El Triunfo and San Antonio have already been victims of past local mining. The chemicals left behind at abandoned mines have infiltrated their water supply over time, contaminating it and killing off aquatic species. For example, López adds that at the La Pitalla mine, untreated arsenic was left lying out in the open, posing a danger to the health of people living nearby and the environment.

The consequences are visible to the naked eye. In order to get clean water, the people now travel 4 kilometers or wait for the arrival of water tankers.

One of these people, Manuela Rivera Cota, housewife, craftswoman, and farmer, sells her products at the San Antonio cultural festival. Alongside other artists who offer articles made of wood from trees knocked down by the passage of hurricane Odile, and vendors of regional sweets, spices, local bread, and goat cheese, Manuela sells plants she grows at home.

They look like they have a happy life although they must struggle everyday to survive in a village with scarce resources.

She says she is witness to the effects of mining in the nearby villages. The company promised work, scholarships, household electronics, study courses, community services, and medical attention, among other things. As a result she and other villagers initially signed off in support of the mine's placement.

Manuela and her family will never be in favor of the new mine: she explains that her 98 year old mother has to take great pains to avoid the hazards. Rivera adds that her sons are aware of the danger caused by the mining activities and are also against it.

None the less, some of San Antonio's population are already accustomed to mining work and are in favor of the La Pitalla project.

Adolfo de la Peña Arámburo, ex miner, merchant, and farmer, has lived in San Antonio for 64 years. His children are the family's fourth generation to be born here. After they finished school, they went to work in the mines and live in the village.

"San Antonio was founded on mining," he emphasizes, and defends himself by saying, "our water has a high level of arsenic and we're still alive."

**Students from Benemérita High School, José María Morelos y Pavón, in La Paz,*

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Los Cardones Mine divides community; former City Council faces imprisonment

*Text and photos by Victoria Madrigal and Félix Alejandro Sandoval**

LAS PADERCITAS

On March 4th, 2015 this cattle ranch, located within the Sierra la Laguna Biosphere Reserve, was victim to a violent attack. Thirty people of unknown origin evicted, under threat of death, everyone they found on the ranch, demolished a house, and stole a number of valuable items. They knocked down corrals and the ranch's cattle have wandered off.

Employees from the private security company surround Rancho Padercitas and monitor traffic in and out.



Jorge Ricardo Cordero, the 74 year old owner of the property, states that since then the members of his family have continued to be accosted by private security guards who have set up a camper on the ranch. Additionally, starting from the community of El Rosario, just a few kilometers from the ranch, Private Security S. de R.L. de C.V. has set up two guard posts that monitor traffic in and out, and also has employees surrounding the property.

Cordero asks: "what is it that they are guarding and why"?

According to his son Cristián Cordero, not only have they attacked the family but also the environment because these employees are defecating openly on the land, contaminating the biosphere reserve, and destroying vegetation.

The family has reported these actions to the authorities.

"We have gone to both the Public Prosecutor and the Office of Human Rights, but there has been no response from either. They have done nothing; we don't have authorities here. The Assistant District Attorney told us that they can do nothing until someone is killed", Cordero recounts.

The Corderos have had conflicts for some time with the Los Cardones mining project, run by Desarrollo Zapal S.A. de C.V.. In order to begin the work, the company needs 1,000 hectares of the 2,500 the family owns, according to Cordero.

The company tried to purchase the land but the family refused because they have lived on the property for more than 73 years.

Jorge Ricardo Cordero, 74 and property owner of the ranch adjacent to the mining project, discusses how his family members have been accosted.



Then, Cordero adds that the company, which owns the adjacent Ejido Jesús María,

incorrectly measured the property lines in order to appropriate the land.

These actions provoked a complaint against the project, initiated by the Mesoamerican Movement Against the Extractive Mining Model, M4.

In Cordero's opinion, "if the company begins work, everything will be even worse."

Those in charge at both the security and mining companies did not respond to various attempts by Melóncoyote for comments.

Mexican civil society has taken great interest in the attacks after the lack of response from the authorities. The Citizen's Water and Life Defense Front, formed by 37 organizations like CEMDA, Niparajá, MAS, Conciencia, and others has helped to collect food and funds, repair damages incurred on March 4th, and provide legal support.

They have also organized town halls and conferences to increase awareness of the issue. In one of these they compared the mine that once existed in Los Planes, also in Baja California Sur with the one that would be developed on the Cordero family's property.

"Los Planes has wells with up to 800 mg of arsenic when both the World Health Organization and National Academy of Science permit just 3 mg," they note.

"This is a mine that had minimal activity, and all that it produced in its entire lifetime, this project would produce in just 10 days", emphasized Juan Ángel Trasviña, member of the Citizen's Front and a UNAM chemical engineer, in his invitation to Baja California Sur citizens to help in the defense effort.

In spite of having support from cities and towns across the state, the Corderos don't have support from the ranch's closest communities.

"They don't even stop by here, they don't talk to me or even say hello. Many deny knowing where the ranch is, others say it doesn't exist, and some will even give visitors the wrong directions so that they end up getting lost," Cordero remarks.

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Even today, bags filled with soil samples taken at the mine in the 1970s can still be found.



According to the company's project and published by Semarnat on its website, the mine dates back to the 1970s.

Cordero recalls this and says, "between 1984 and 1987 they rented the land. Engineers came to take samples and brought drills from the United States and they clear cut the trees. There were spills and the water ran off into the arroyo. They are well aware of what they are doing."

Today you can still find bags of dirt that speak to past activities on the mountain.

Experts affirm that the Los Cardones silver and gold extraction project brings with it irreversible damage such as: deforestation, extinction of endemic species, contamination of aquifers, and greenhouse gas emissions.

It was said recently that the change in zoning was approved in a secret government session where those in attendance included head Councilman Fausto René Álvarez

Gámez representing the mayor, and union members Francisco Javier Moreno Soria, Silvia García González, José Guadalupe Iñiguez Cabada, Norma Alicia Castañeda, Ricardo Fiol Higuera, Javier Martínez González, José de la Toba Camacho, Alma Melissa Bernal Araiza, Javier González Rubio Cerecer, Saúl Lamas Guzmán, and José Francisco Rubio Salgado.

Former municipal president Francisco Monroy Sánchez insisted that the Los Cardones project was not approved in its entirety because Desarrollo Zapal still has not proven ownership of the land.

On September 29th the La Paz city council resolved that the secret session held by former city council members, where they supposedly approved the zoning changes for Los Cardones, did not meet valid, legal requirements. They will go forward with criminal charges and impeachment proceedings against them.

**Students of the Benemérita Escuela Preparatoria José María Morelos y Pavón in La Paz, and participants in the workshop "Grassroots Journalism for Sustainable Development in Northwest Mexico"*

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Last ditch effort: Mexico steps up protection to save the Vaquita Porpoise

By César Angulo*

GULF OF CALIFORNIA

“What you do to the smallest of my brothers you do to me” - Mexican folk song

As a means of saving the fewer than 100 individuals left of the Vaquita porpoise

(Vaquita Marina, *Phocoena sinus* (http://www.edgeofexistence.org/mammals/species_info.php?id=78)), a small cetacean endemic to the upper Gulf of California, the protected marine area has been increased by 2.9 million acres.

According to the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (Semarnat), the enlargement of the marine zone is part of a program that includes: economic compensation of fishers; intervention by the military and federal environmental and fishing agency officials within the zone to ensure improved inspection and surveillance; and the introduction of new fishing techniques.

The Vaquita seems headed inevitably towards extinction. Or at least that's what the constant decline in the population of this marine mammal, which inhabits the most productive fisheries in Mexico, indicates.

There are many fishers and inhabitants of coastal towns surrounding the Vaquita's protected area who doubt the animal's existence. That isn't unusual, since it is an animal that has only been photographed a few times; most of the images circulating are of dead animals found by fishers in their nets.

Even so, and thanks to pressure from the international scientific and conservation communities, the Mexican government has decided to launch a final and desperate effort to save the Vaquita from extinction.

In the watershed year of 2015, Semarnat has announced that their strategy includes a complete 2 year fishing ban in the area, during which time fishers will receive a subsidy, and will be employed as community police to protect the species.

The Mexican government will allocate at least 1.082 million pesos (some 72.6 million dollars) towards these actions.

The Vaquita is endemic to the upper Gulf of California and is the world's smallest cetacean. It has the most restricted range of any cetacean and is the most endangered of the 128 species worldwide.

The Vaquita porpoise has rarely been photographed; most of the available images are of dead animals caught in fishing nets.
Photo: courtesy of Cousteau.org.



The conservation NGO Greenpeace Mexico considers that Semarnat's announcement of the 2 year fishing ban in the upper Gulf of California has arrived very late in the fight to try to save the remaining 97 Vaquita porpoises.

“Although the measures announced are a huge first step in the protection of the Vaquita, we can't lose any more time. The program was expected to become effective as of March, so we mustn't lose yet another minute in its implementation. It's imperative that we move from promises to actions,” claims Sylvia Diaz, head of the Greenpeace Oceans program.

Greenpeace adds that with the Mexican government's announcement that it will buy drones and fast boats to patrol the area, and compensate fishers, what also needs to happen is a plan for developing sustainable fishing techniques in the communities of San Felipe and Santa Clara in the upper Gulf of California, a location where fishing is the principal economic activity.

They mention that the illegal fishing of totoaba, another endangered species whose value on the black market in Mexico and China is extremely high, has increased dangerously within the Vaquita's range over the last 2 years, causing the Vaquita population to plummet alarmingly.

“The federal government's initiatives are positive but more is needed. The high black market value of the totoaba, and the fact that organized crime is becoming involved in its fishing and illegal trafficking, makes fighting these practices much more complicated,” adds Diaz.

**Primer lugar, Premio de Reportaje sobre Biodiversidad, México 2006 y
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Mexico seeks compliance with international shark fishing norms

By Talli Nauman*

CIUDAD DE MÉXICO

Mexico has 106 species of shark, many of which are present in the Gulf of California, and many that are vulnerable or endangered. Such is the case of the Shovelnose shark (*Sphyrna tiburo*). Other species are candidates for comercialization. And there are many others that experts know very little about.

Since 2014, the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna, CITES, has controlled the commerce of three species of Hammerhead and Whitetip Sharks, all found in Mexican waters. (Photo: Mauricio Hoyos).



In light of these reasons and as a signatory of the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), Mexico held a workshop June 8-10, 2015 in which the current state of conservation of Mexican sharks was evaluated.

More than 30 experts from academic institutions, NGOs, government agencies, and the environmental and fishing sectors met in Mexico City, their goal to evaluate the susceptibility, productivity, and management of sharks in national waters.

“The cure for fear and over exploitation lies in knowledge and sustainable use,” was the theme of the meeting.

They recommended the following: improve the exchange of information between authorities and researchers; systematize the analysis of capture logs; employ the results of genetic studies to delimit shark populations; and consider other factors causing pressure on both species and fisheries, such as climate.

Additionally they suggested: implementing measures to strengthen the ability to extract and disseminate information on fish landings (catch); monitor the implementation of current measures that restrict the capture of hatchlings and juveniles; consider other possible measures, such as quotas, minimum or maximum sizes, and no fishing zones, among others; carry out education and advertisement campaigns to promote compliance of said measures, taking advantage of the experience of civil society organizations in working with fishing communities; consider alternatives and incentives for fishermen faced with the regulation measures that are being implemented; and exploring options that give added value to products promoting sustainable, legal, traceable, and just production chains.

They agreed to do the following:

- a. Develop a joint agenda to revise and address the recommendations derived from the workshop;
- b. Collaborate in the verification of the shark species to which fins being exported

- belong;
- c. Meet to detail the compliance measures of both Mexico's Environmental Law (NOM) and ban that could contribute to the formulation of Non-Detriment Findings (NDF), required from the National Commission on Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (Conabio) by CITES.
 - d. Use the proposal as presented by Conabio on conversion factors of body weight to fins, as well as consider other measures or carry out other studies, in order to help issue the NDF;
 - e. Review past experiences of international evaluations of Mako and Bigeye Thresher sharks using the Stock Synthesis software; and
 - f. Provide information about blue sharks and other species of of commercial importance in order to include them in the evaluation.

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