



E-News Bulletin

Gulf of Mexico

Large Marine Ecosystem

(GoM LME)



Year 1. No. 02
April - May 2010

E-News Bulletin

Gulf of Mexico

Large Marine Ecosystem



National Water Commission, CONAGUA video-call meeting (9 April)	3
Experts Workshop on Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in the Gulf of Mexico. Merida, Yucatan. Mexico (13 April)	3
Workshop: “Building a Community of Practice for Long Term of Engagement with Coastal Communities, Initial Focus Topic: Sea Level Rise” St. Petersburg, Florida U.S.A (19-21 April)	4
Papaloapan River: Restoring its wetlands, Pronatura. INE, Mexico City (20 April)	5
Workshop Analysis of the current activities and priorities in the Grijalva-Usumacinta watershed Region and Capacity Building Activities (22 april)	6
Seminary of the Mexican-French Marine and Coastal Observatory “Jacques Yves Cousteau” Mexico City (26-28 April)	6
Visit to Terminos Lagoon to define restoration of mangrove areas. Campeche, Mexico (26– 28 April)	7
5th Global Conference on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands, UNESCO. Paris, France (3-5 May)	8
UNESCO-IHE meeting, Delft, The Netherlands (5-7 May)	8
Meeting with Mexico’s National Commissioner for Natural Protected Areas. Mexico City (6 may)	9
Science and Technology applied to the offshore and deepwater industry. Mexico City (11 May)	9
Experts Meeting for the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Mexico City (14 May)	9
Workshop: Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in the Gulf of Mexico. Merida, Yucatan (24-26 May)	10
4th Global Environmental Facility, GEF Assembly. Punta del Este, Uruguay (24-28 May)	11
Upcoming Events	13

E-News Bulletin

Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem

RECENT GoM LME PROJECT ACTIVITIES

National Water Commission (CONAGUA) Video conference call, (9 April)

The video conference call meeting with the National Water Commission was held at CONAGUA's headquarters in Mexico City between the GoM LME staff and the organisms responsible for management of the Bravo River, Northern Gulf, Central Gulf, Southern Border and Yucatan Peninsula watersheds, which are rendering basins to the Gulf of Mexico.

The main objectives were to present the GoM LME project to CONAGUA and its local watershed management organisms, especially the pollution and nutrient over enrichment component of the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) and its expected goals. Also, to inform about the organization of the International Regional Watersheds Forum: *"From the Rivers to the Gulf of Mexico: Towards an Ecosystem Management Approach"* and to invite them to take part of it. Finally, to create a link of communication and joint cooperation between the GoM LME project and CONAGUA.

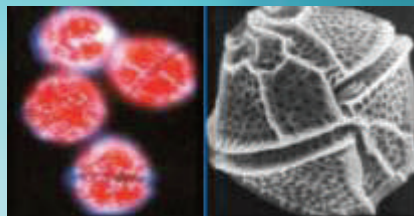
Support of CONAGUA and its watershed organisms offered to the GoM LME project: the confirmed participation of CONAGUA in the Regional International Forum and the possible participation of the general director in the Forum inauguration and a roundtable in the Clean Beaches Forum to present Project.



Experts Workshop on Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in the Gulf of Mexico Veracruz, Mexico (13 April)

The Harmful Algal Bloom (HABs) workshop was organized by the Government of Veracruz State of Mexico in collaboration with the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) of the US. Meeting was attended by Mexican local authorities such as the state health services from Tabasco, Veracruz and Campeche coastal States, researchers from the Institute of Ecology of Jalapa and CINVESTAV, Merida and the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem Project (GoM LME)

The meeting Agenda included presentations on the actions done by each of the Mexican states in regard to HABs current monitoring programs, as well as the advances on the buoys installation (3) in Veracruz coasts donated by EPA. The EPA presented the history of nearly 10 years of activities in the region, which include: HABs taxonomy courses, donation of diverse type of field and laboratory equipment, small sampling boats and remote sensing gear .



On behalf the GoM LME Project Dr. Porfirio Alvarez presented the main goals of the project regarding the HABs topic, and Dr. Jorge Herrera explained on the activities for HABs done in Yucatan State aligned to the activities and work plan within the Gulf of Mexico LME project. The participants recognized the advances of the Yucatan state in this topic, holding HABs data for over 10 years, being able to prepare HABs bulletins, and other clear advances related to HABs.

Workshop highlighted the importance of the work done by GCOOS with HABSOS system and invited the audience to explore the preparation of the Mexican chapter of the HAB System to gather all available information. It is worth to mention that the National Commission for the Conservation of biodiversity of Mexico (CONABIO) is about to display a web site devoted to HABs to be use for tracking, reporting and to help regional institutions interested in HABs to have a working informative internet site.

On the other hand, Dr. Alvarez strongly recognized and congratulated both EPA and participant coastal authorities from Mexican coastal states on their advances and performance, and they agreed that considering the long term condition and wider approach of the GoM LME Project, the Mexican States will take part of the Regional Assessment on the current conditions of HABs in the GoM and will help in crafting the likely future actions needed to enhance installed capacities for HABs.

Dr. Alvarez took the opportunity to insist in inviting both, the Mexican and US attendees to participate in the Workshop on HABs to be held in Merida City in May 25-26, 2010 which will be hosted by the GoM LME GEF project.



Workshop: “Building a Community of Practice for Long Term of Engagement with Coastal Communities, Initial Focus Topic: Sea Level Rise”. St. Petersburg, U.S.A (19-21 April)

The workshop was organized by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), The Sea Grant of Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi and Alabama, Local Community planners, Education and Outreach leaders, and communication leaders in the Gulf of Mexico.



Overall goals of the workshop were to:

- ◆ Bring together organizations from around the Gulf of Mexico that are or will be conducting education, outreach and/or extension (EOE) on sea level rise issues;



- ◆ Discuss current awareness, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and knowledge levels, related to climate change and sea level rise in Gulf of Mexico communities, and in particular amongst local officials;



- ◆ Learn from community leaders around the Gulf of Mexico who are taking steps to understand and plan for sea level rise impacts; provide scientific information on SLR and explore how community based social marketing techniques might inform and enhance SLR EOE;
- ◆ Share existing tools and identify additional information and tools needed to support effective EOE on SLR; and
- ◆ Identify mechanisms for ongoing dialog, information sharing, and collaboration on climate change EOE.

Tools currently used for creating different scenarios on sea level rise in states like Louisiana and Mississippi were presented and possible collaboration partnerships emerged considering the possibility to start sharing these tools.

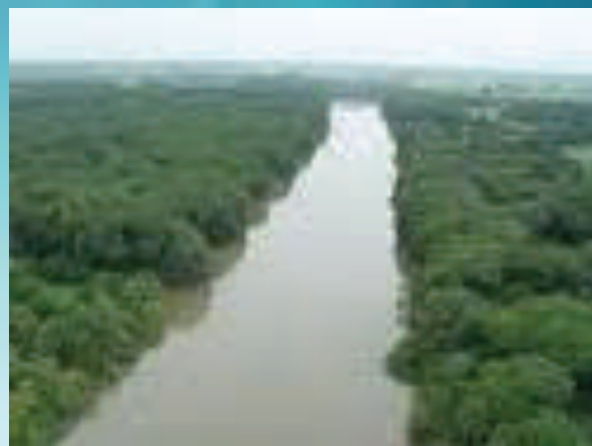


It was highlighted that local communities are on the pre-contemplation stage where awareness raising is needed because communities are not doing enough to address SLR. As a result, educators and stakeholders agreed that it is necessary to spread a common message that reflects reality through specific leaders.

The participation of the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem Project in this workshop increased collaboration between the Sea Grant and NOAA agencies. As a result, possible collaborative efforts to start actions against SLR in local communities in Mexico will be planned. The participation of Sea Grant and NOAA members in upcoming events planned for education and outreach in the Mexican portion of the Gulf will be fruitful and will contribute to capacity building activities that are part of the goals of the GoM LME project.**

Papaloapan River: Restoring its wetlands, Pronatura. INE, Mexico City, (20 April)

The NGO Pronatura Veracruz staff presented a study of the Papaloapan River wetlands at the National Institute of Ecology (INE). A relevant conclusion was:



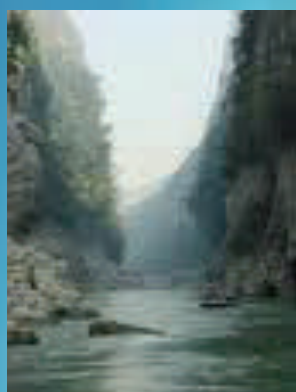
- ◆ Since there is a world-wide trend of loss in wet-land water bodies, their past functional hydro-period, the hydrological connectivity and the needed seasonality, must be acknowledged and reproduced in order to be able to ecologically restore degraded areas.

A crucial question remains on how to convince the landowners to get rid of the cattle and let some areas to be restored. When will the environmental services compete with the land use profitability?



Workshop Analysis of the current activities and priorities in the Grijalva-Usumacinta Watershed Region and Capacity Building Activities (22 April)

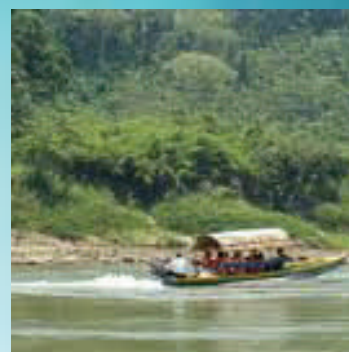
Researchers and representatives from several research institutions such as Colegio de la Frontera Sur, Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco, Universidad Politécnica de Mesoamérica, Universidad de Ciencias y Artes de Chiapas, Instituto de Historia Natural de Chiapas, Instituto



Instituto Tecnológico de Comitán y Centro Geo, attended the meeting in Tenosique, Tabasco and reviewed the different topics studied in the region as well as their progress with the main goal of creating a Research Network for the Usumacinta Region.



The GoM-LME Project's mission was to conduct a rapid assessment of the current capacity-building activities and priorities occurring in the Grijalva-Usumacinta Watershed Region. The workshop's main achievements were: a) A review of research progress in the Usumacinta Watershed; b) The construction of the Research Network for the Usumacinta Watershed (RedRum); c) The agreement to prepare a book on the Usumacinta Watershed; d) A discussion of the contents on a Scientific Congress on the Usumacinta Watershed Region; and finally, e) The invitation to participate in the GoM-LME Project activities (such as the GoM-LME Regional International Forum "From the Rivers to the Gulf of Mexico, Towards an Ecosystem Management Approach", to be held in October 2010).



Seminary of the Mexican-French Marine and Coastal Observatory “Jacques-Ives Cousteau” (26 - 28 April)

An “observatory” is a consortium of institutions, coordinated to monitor ecosystem-wide trends and events to support management decision making. The Mexican-French Marine and Coastal Observatory “Jacques-Ives Cousteau” is a cooperative effort between Mexican and French research institutions to design and implement a monitoring system for the Mexican coasts. During the first seminary, held in La Paz, Baja California Sur on 23-24 June, 2009 the Observatory was presented and general aspects of its objectives and organization were introduced and discussed and the Pacific Chapter of the Observatory was inaugurated.



During this second seminary, besides the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean chapter being inaugurated, presentations were held by Mexican and French institutions (e.g. CIEMAD, CICIMAR, CICESE, CINVESTAV, EPOMEX, INAPESCA, L'Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Université de Montpellier and the Jacques-Ives Cousteau Foundation) regarding capabilities and contributions to the observatory.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by SEMARNAT and the French Embassy during this event.

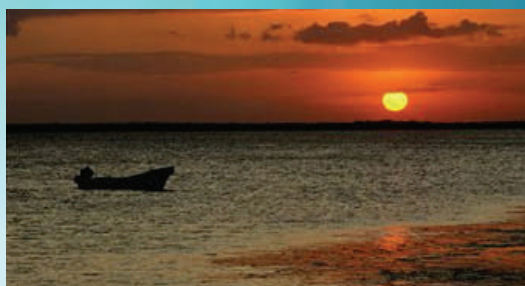
The GoM LME objectives and components were presented during the seminar, establishing valuable links with institutions and giving a base for future collaborations.

Visit to Terminos Lagoon, Campeche, Mexico (26-28 April)

According to the Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) Approach, its main objectives are to foster habitat conservation and natural resources management in coastal areas and to mitigate impacts in degraded areas. The Coordinator of the Pilot Project on Mangrove Restoration visited identified sites of degraded mangroves in Terminos Lagoon. He met with different academy and institution representatives in Ciudad del Carmen to introduce contents, objectives and goals of the pilot project in order to define partnership and collaborative work in the region. Several meetings were conducted with the National Commission for Natural Protected Areas (CONANP), The Navy Sector of Ciudad del Carmen (SEMAR), Universidad del Carmen (UNACAR) and local government officers of Isla Aguada, Campeche.

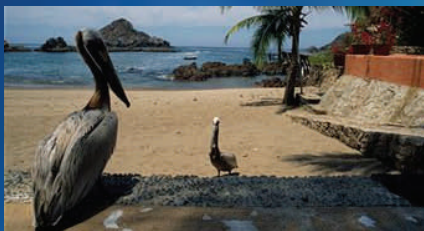


Ten sites of degraded mangroves were visited and 100 ha of the Bahamita area were chosen to start the pilot project according to ecological, social and logistic conditions. CONANP and UNACAR offered collaborative action for different activities of the pilot project, whereas the Government of Isla Aguada offered support with eighty people from the local community to start mangrove restoration actions.



5th Global Conference on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands, UNESCO. Paris, France (3 – 5 May)

The Fifth Global Conference on Oceans, Coasts and Islands, took place at the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) headquarters in Paris, France, from 3-7 May 2010. The Conference was organized by the Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands, which was created by an informal World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) coordinating group in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. Comprised of individuals from governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Global Forum serves as a platform for cross-sectoral information sharing and dialogue on issues affecting oceans, coasts and islands, with the goal of achieving sustainable development in these areas. The Fifth Global Conference was co-hosted by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), UNESCO, and the Government of France.



The conference was organized around three thematic sessions: ensuring survival; preserving life; and improving governance. The event also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the IOC and the International Year of Biodiversity 2010. It brought together over 850 participants from 80 countries (63% of which were developing countries and small island developing states), including leaders from governments, UN and other international agencies, NGOs, industry, oceans donors, organized science groups, and networks of museums and aquaria.

One GoM-LME Project Coordination Unit staff member attended this conference for networking purposes as well as to assess possible collaboration and supporting options. Furthermore this participation represented an ideal opportunity to invite key stakeholders to the GoM-LME Watersheds' Regional International Forum.**

UNESCO-IHE, Delft, the Netherlands (May 5 - 7)

The UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education was established in 2003. It carries out research, education and capacity building activities in the fields of water, environment and infrastructure. The Institute is based in Delft, the Netherlands, and is owned by all UNESCO member states. It is established as a UNESCO 'category I' institute jointly by UNESCO and the Government of the Netherlands. The Institute is the largest water education facility in the world, and the only institution in the UN system authorised to confer accredited MSc degrees. UNESCO-IHE is instrumental in strengthening the efforts of other universities and research centres to increase the knowledge and skills of professionals working in the water sector.



The GoM-LME staff visited UNESCO-IHE to invite them to the International Forum on Watershed Management, as well as to assess possible collaboration options between such institute and the GoM-LME project. The required IHE participation on the Watersheds Regional International Forum, is mainly in two ways: as facilitators (for the discussion tables) and as speakers in the following topics (considered as part of the topics programmed for the forum): environmental flows, wastewater management, integrated river basin management, ecosystem approach, among others. The interviewed staff was very interested in attending the coming forum as for further collaboration options. **

Meeting with the Mexican National Commissioner for Natural Protected Areas, (6 May)

The GoM LME staff met with the Mexican National Commissioner for Natural Protected Areas, Luis Fueyo Mac Donald with the aim of strengthening collaboration between the GoM LME project and CONANP. The project coordinator presented the GoM LME project and highlighted the importance of collaboration in the following upcoming events:

- ♦ A Workshop to analyze the creation of networks for Marine Protected Areas in the Gulf of Mexico;
- ♦ A biodiversity hotspots meeting and workshop;
- ♦ A workshop to develop the environmental education strategy for the Gulf of Mexico region and;
- ♦ Different cooperation mechanisms for the three pilot projects of the GoM LME that are being implemented in the natural protected area of Laguna de Términos, Campeche.



The meeting concluded with particular commitments from both members. The Commissioner agreed to support the GoM LME project in different planned activities that were mentioned during the meeting and the GoM LME offered support in the integration of the guideline document requested by CONANP to the Ministry of Communication and Transport (SCT) regarding a new highway in Campeche and the possible environmental impacts and benefits.**

Science and Technology applied to the offshore and deepwater industry (11 May)

The Society of Ex Fellows of the German Academic Exchange Service invited the GoM LME Project Coordinator to present the project and the possible environmental impacts that are expected as a result of the oil spill in the north-west part of the Gulf of Mexico.

In this meeting, some leading researchers from the Atmosphere Science Center of the Mexico's National Autonomous University (UNAM) presented some modeling studies that can be used to explain the behavior of currents in the Gulf of Mexico and predict possible trajectories of the oil spill.

The National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO) also presented a real-time satellite-monitoring system for oceanographic parameters and expressed their willingness to cooperate with the Project.



Experts Meeting for the “Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in the Gulf of México” México City (14 May)

The meeting was organized by the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem Project and the Intersectoral Commission for the Sustainable Management of Seas and Coasts of Mexico (CIMARES).



It aimed at the consultation of different Experts from different disciplines involved in the Deep-water Horizon Oil Spill for developing a strategy to prevent environmental impacts in the region, the definition of paths for establishing a monitoring baseline in coastal and marine ecosystems, to define specific actions for bilateral collaboration and to produce a document with the main aspects and actions required in addressing this event.

Different academic institutions participated in this event: IPN, UNAM, CINVESTAV; and representatives from governmental organizations as well (SRE, SCT, PEMEX, SEMAR, IMP, CONABIO and CONANP) with the main objective of analyzing, from a technical and scientific perspective, the possible impacts of the oil spill in the Mexican coasts.

Three perspectives were considered during this event:

As part of the conclusions, the need to establish permanent monitoring tools was highlighted.

Experts who participated agreed on the preparation of a technical and scientific report that will be used at CIMARES during the next meeting.

This document will provide the baseline for marine and coastal ecosystems monitoring that subsequently will be useful to design a strategy for environmental impacts prevention and set the bases for a bilateral collaboration between Mexico and U.S.A.**



Workshop: Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in the Gulf of Mexico, Mérida, Yucatan (24-26 May)

This workshop brought together experts from the Mexican Gulf Region who are working on HABs monitoring and water quality, with the main objective of developing a program to standardize and harmonize existing individual and institutional efforts.

Along with this objective was the assessment of different ongoing monitoring programs, as well as an analysis of needs.

This was a very successful workshop in that academic and governmental agencies sat together, shared their experiences and synergies for the HABs monitoring were created.

Furthermore, all participants committed to following up all tasks related to the workshop, cooperating to harmonize methodologies, and participating in the development of a GoM LME HABs monitoring program.



Deepwater Horizon oil spill. GoM LME project activities. JUNE

Derived from the meeting of experts called by the GoM LME project and the Intersecretarial Commission for Sustainable Management of Seas and Coasts (CIMARES), several follow-up meetings have been held. Two groups at different levels have been created. On the one hand, a special working group for the oil spill crafted upon CIMARES request gathers all federal agencies in order to support actions and activities that will be needed to implement the National Contingency Plan. It now has a legal affairs subgroup.

On the other hand, the Internal Group of SEMARNAT to address the Deepwater Horizon oil spill is the environmental sector working group. Chaired by the National Protected Areas Commissioner, this group has gathered all the environmental federal agencies in order to have a common vision and support the National Contingency Plan. A subgroup for base-line monitoring has also been created, with the task of defining the best methods and analyses to be performed before the oil spill reaches the Mexican coasts.



**The 4th GEF Assembly,
UNIDO's Green Industry Side Event
Punta del Este, Uruguay, May 24-28, 2010**

The Fourth GEF Assembly was opened by GEF CEO and Chairperson Ms. Monique Barbut, and introduced the Vice President of Uruguay Mr. Danilo Astori, who welcomed participants, and emphasized that the Fifth GEF fund replenishment is the largest in history, noting that larger amounts will be needed to achieve sustainability goals in the world. The 4th Assembly selected Ms. Graciela Musiera, Minister of Environment of Uruguay, as Chair of the fourth GEF Assembly and for donor countries to Mr. Bruno Oberle of Switzerland, whereas Mr. Abdul Rahman Al Arian, from Yemen was designated for recipient countries as Vice-Chairs.

Chair Musiera remarked the importance of environmental protection for Uruguay, underscoring the role of multilateralism and the need to address the victims of chemicals mismanagement. Monique Barbut underscored the unprecedented fifth replenishment of the GEF (GEF-5), and described GEF transformations towards a more effective, transparent, accessible and equitable mechanism. Among goals achieved, she highlighted the creation of system for a transparent allocation of resources (STAR) and the simplification of project approval processes, as a “driving force behind country ownership.” On challenges for GEF-5, she mentioned: improving the partnership’s efficiency by strengthening collaboration with Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs); simplifying the project cycle; setting up a Results Based Performance System (RBPS); and increasing country ownership of projects.



UNIDO's Green Industry Initiative

At the 4th GEF Assembly UNIDO's Director General, Mr. Kandeh K. Yumkella, highlighted UNIDO's Green Industry Initiative, which links the environment and development agendas and the UN report “Energy for a Sustainable Future” on universal access to energy and energy efficiency.

This side event focused on demonstrating UNIDO's response of greening of industries. In particular, to better inform GEF stakeholders of UNIDO's position in joining the global effort in combating environmental degradation. Panel of experts discussed on how enterprises in developing countries can become greener and lessen their environmental impacts footprint while at the same time continuing to grow and deliver goods, services and jobs to their populations.

The side event discussions were done based on the following scope:

Developed countries must find development paths that maintain the currently high quality of life of their peoples, while significantly reducing the resource intensity of their economies and reduce the amounts of material and energy inputs. Emerging countries must find development paths that allow them to continue to give their peoples a better quality of life while keeping steady, and reducing to a certain degree, the resource intensity of their economies. The less developed countries must continue to focus strongly on giving their peoples a better quality of life while finding development paths that avoid their growing economies from being locked into high resource intensity patterns in the future.

The Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem Project was presented and addressed the role of UNIDO in the context of current actions to reduce pollution, recovery of depleted fish stocks, and rehabilitation of coastal and marine ecosystems. In such particular context, the accident of the Deepwater Horizon and the related oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico was highlighted.

Current and Upcoming Events

Fifth National Meeting on Clean Beaches	Ixtapa, Zihuatanejo Guerrero, México	2 - 5 June
Outreach Meeting International Forum on River Basins to the Gulf of Mexico GETF	Washington D.C., U.S.A.	15 June
Hypoxia Expert Consultation GEF-STAP	Washington D.C. U.S.A	16 –17 June
Training Course on Governace & Marine Protected Ar- eas, Harte Research Institute	Corpus Christi U.S.A	20—25 June
Consultation on Operationahsation of the Caribbean Sea Commission	Barbados	7—9 July
International Course: Structure and function of Man- grove forests: Current Concepts and their application to restoration and rehabilitation projects” Organized by GoM LME	Mérida, Yucatán México	12 – 24 July
Experts Workshop: Enhancing Shrimp Production through Ecosystem Based Management organized by the GoM LME project	Ciudad del Carmen, Campeche, México	11-13 August
International Forum “From the Rivers to the Gulf of Mexico. Towards an Ecosystem Management Ap- proach” Organized by the GoM LME project	Ciudad de México, México	28-30 September
Regional Workshop for Environmental Education for Natural Protected Areas. Organized between GoM LME project and CONANP	TBA	September (TBA)
Binational Forum of Marine Living Resources in the Gulf of Mexico organized by the GoM LME project	Ciudad del Carmen, Campeche	October (TBA)
First Mexican Meeting of Mangrove Ecosystem: Re- search Education and Management in contrast to local and global changes	Mérida, Yucatán México	25 - 29 October
Training Course on Probabilistic Sampling Design or- ganized by the GoM LME project	Mérida Yucatán México	TBA



Contact:

Dr. Porfirio Alvarez Torres
Chief Technical Advisor

www.gulfofmexico-lme.org