

*Sustainable Finance for Protected Areas:*

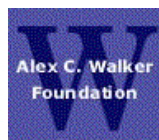
## VISITOR DONATIONS

*Islas del Golfo Reserve, Mexico*



2005

*In Partnership with:*



## Acknowledgements

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Authors: Andy Drumm, John E. Terborgh

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For further information on how The Nature Conservancy is using ecotourism as a conservation strategy or to provide feedback, please contact:

The Nature Conservancy  
Worldwide Office  
4245 North Fairfax Drive  
Suite 100  
Arlington, VA 22203 USA  
Email: [ecotourisminfo@tnc.org](mailto:ecotourisminfo@tnc.org)

**[www.nature.org/ecotourism](http://www.nature.org/ecotourism)**

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by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.*

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report evaluates a pilot project designed to raise income through visitor donations for the conservation of a network of six natural protected areas in Southern Baja California, Mexico. The report examines the design, implementation, and results from year one of the project and presents recommendations for future work.

The pilot project took place at the “Islas del Golfo de California” National Flora and Fauna Reserve which receives approximately 25,000 visitors annually who participate in scuba diving, snorkeling, kayaking, and camping. To determine the most effective design for generating income for conservation at the site, a visitor price-responsiveness survey was conducted, the costs of managing tourism were assessed, and consultations were held with stakeholders.

The design phase identified a visitor donation mechanism as the best option to generate income from tourism to complement the minimal entrance fees. Three strategies were proposed: 1) collecting donations through local hotels from their guests 2) offering voluntary dive/whale watching tags to visitors through tour operators and 3) a “Friends of Wild Baja” membership program to encourage and facilitate additional donations. A fund was created called FOSANP (Fondo Sudcaliforniano para las Areas Naturales Protegidas) to receive and manage the income that was generated. A local Conservancy partner and conservation NGO, Niparajá, was selected to administer the fund.

Although during the first year of implementation less revenue was collected than expected, from an organizational perspective the fund achieved important advances in becoming established as a long-term source of income for conservation. A board of directors consisting of key stakeholders including protected area managers, tour operators, academics, and NGOs was successfully recruited to supervise the fund. The fund also produced informational materials along with a program web site to educate visitors about the conservation value of the protected areas and to promote the program’s activities. In addition, the fund established relationships with hotels and tour operators that have resulted in the collection of donations and the identification of ways to improve the income generation mechanisms that were selected.

In the future, FOSANP should consider changing its hotel donation program to one that automatically collects a small fee instead of soliciting donations from each guest individually. The fund would also benefit from receiving support from a local tourism consultant to develop stronger strategic alliances with tour operators for improving the dive/whale watching tag mechanism and to further develop support from cruise line operators. To increase donations through the “Friends of Wild Baja” membership program, FOSANP should provide training to guides to enable them to better promote the program to encourage donations from their customers. The fund should also begin the process of expanding the use of these income generating strategies to the other targeted protected areas of the Southern Baja California network.

## II. INTRODUCTION

### **The Importance of Generating Income from Tourism for Conservation**

Visitation to natural protected areas is increasing rapidly in many countries around the world. This rising tourism tide is exceeding the capacity of many protected areas. As a result, tourism is increasingly being identified as a threat to biodiversity. To avoid the loss of valuable biodiversity through tourism related pressures, and in order to access the benefits that tourism can generate for protected areas, it is essential that protected areas have sufficient capacity in terms of infrastructure, personnel and management systems in place.

In many developing countries, park systems have not been able to finance the investments necessary to install this capacity at areas facing pressure from visitation. Furthermore, many have not yet implemented a comprehensive system of tourism-based income generation mechanisms to at least cover the costs that visitation creates for protected areas. Consequently they are foregoing a significant source of income which could contribute to much-needed investments resulting in:

- Improved protected area management capacity
- Reduced threat to biodiversity
- Better quality visitor experience
- Greater investment in sustainable development opportunities for local communities
- Higher national and international profile of protected areas
- More employment opportunities for local people
- Enhanced environmental education function

Given the growing tourist demand for access to protected natural areas, it is increasingly important that adequate financial mechanisms be implemented to ensure that tourism and recreation contribute to biodiversity conservation. For many parks, tourism has the potential to be a significant contributor to its financial sustainability. However, the value of recreation opportunities provided by parks is typically under-priced or inefficiently administered.

### **The Tourism Based Income Generation Initiative**

With NGO and government park service partners around the world, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) identified the need for broader applications of appropriate income generating mechanisms at protected areas as a key strategy for supporting biodiversity conservation.

Three sites were selected from thirty applicants from within our network to participate in the Conservancy's Tourism Based Income Generation Initiative, which was developed in the year 2000 with financial support from the Alex C. Walker Foundation and the USAID/TNC Parks in Peril Program.

The selected sites were:

- Eduardo Avaroa Reserve, Bolivia
- Gladden Spit Marine Reserve, Belize
- Islas del Golfo, Baja California, Mexico

As a first step, a review of tourism income generation mechanisms in use around the Americas was carried out (Benitez, 2001; Brown, 2001) to evaluate how and which fee mechanisms are used. Then at each selected site, an analysis of visitation and of the tourism management structure including its capacity and legal context was carried out.

Evaluations of these pilot implementation processes have generated valuable lessons for application at other sites across their national systems and in other countries. Price responsiveness studies, including contingent valuation and contingent behavior studies, were carried out to assist in determining the appropriate fee levels and mechanisms. Subsequently, a mechanism was identified for test applications at each site.

### III. BACKGROUND

#### **The Conservation Significance of Baja California, Mexico**

From a conservation perspective, Mexico's Baja California Peninsula and Gulf of California contain some of the most unique terrestrial and marine environments in the world. The stretch of sea has species representing one-third of Earth's marine mammals and samples of more than 80 percent of the aquatic mammals found in the Pacific Ocean. Approximately 800 species of fish are found in the Gulf. Only the Red Sea harbors more marine diversity, making the Gulf a global conservation priority (Hodgkins, 2003).

The Gulf of California also provides more than half the total of Mexican fisheries by volume. In addition, its rocky coasts and sea islands are home to hundreds of resident and migratory species. Meanwhile, the greatest long-term threat to the biodiversity of Baja and the gulf is that of unregulated tourism development. These projects have the potential to drastically impact the sustainability of these important coastal and island ecosystems, as well as the traditional livelihoods of the many coastal communities in Baja California.

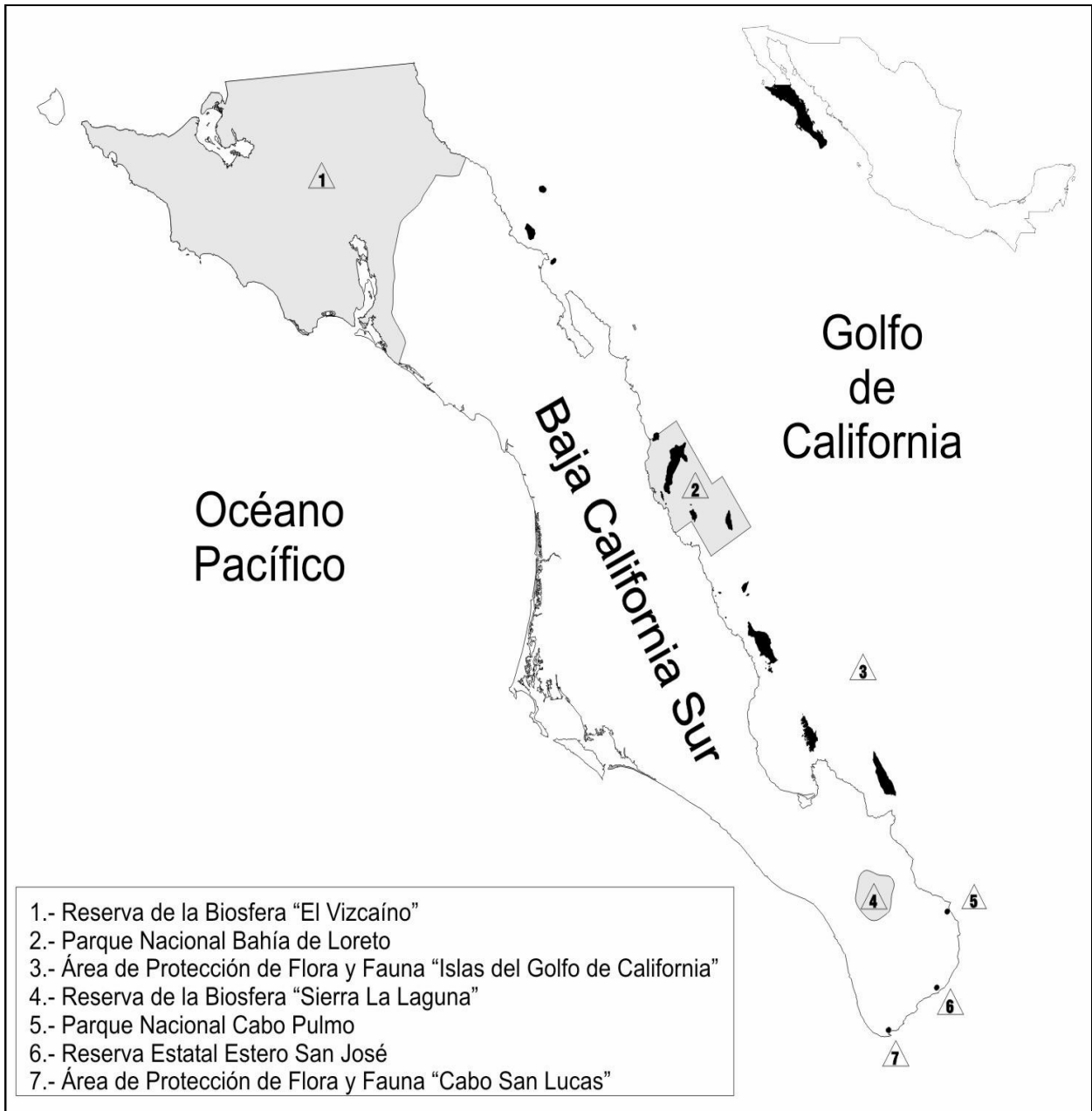
The "Islas del Golfo de California" protected area where the project was first launched contains Isla Espiritu Santo, one of the most ecologically significant islands in the Sea of Cortez. Several animals on Isla Espiritu Santo are found nowhere else in the world, including the blacktailed jack rabbit, ground squirrel and two species of snake. The island is home to 53 regional endemic plant species. The waters surrounding the island support coral reefs, resident colonies of sea lions, and 500 species of fish.

#### **Description of the Targeted Protected Areas**

Due to the high conservation value of Baja as a whole and the rapid growth of tourism to the region, multiple protected areas were targeted in the income generating project at Baja. Beginning with a initial pilot at one of the sites, the plan was to start a program that could eventually administer income generating mechanisms throughout the protected area system of Southern Baja California.

Figure 1 shows a map of the protected areas of Southern Baja California. The following is a list of the six protected areas included in the program as described in the program's brochure (FOSANP, 2004):

- *Cabo Pulmo National Park* - The northernmost living coral reef in the Eastern Pacific and nesting ground for several species of sea turtles. Principal tourism activities include diving, wind surfing and sports fishing.
- *Cabo San Lucas Flora and Fauna Reserve* - The merging point of the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of California. Deep submarine canyons, sand falls and rocky reefs provide multiple habitats for an abundant marine life.



source: CONANP, 2003

**Figure 1: Map of the protected areas of Southern Baja California, Mexico**

- *“El Vizcaíno” Biosphere Reserve* - Contains coastal lagoons which are important reproduction and wintering sites for the grey whale, California sea lion, northern elephant-seal and blue whale. The lagoons are also home to four species of marine turtles. Inland, it houses the largest trove of ancient rock art in the Americas. Principal tourism activities include include whale watching and visiting archaeological sites.
- *“Islas del Golfo de California” Flora and Fauna Reserve* - Includes some of the world’s most ecologically intact islands. These islands provide nesting and breeding areas for numerous marine mammals and sea birds. Several endemic species of flora and fauna also inhabit the islands. The main tourism activities include camping, kayaking, diving and naturalist cruises.

- *Loreto Bay National Park* - Harbors the greatest diversity of marine mammals in Mexico. Once the historic capital of the Californias, Loreto is today the region’s capital of colonial missions and sport fishing. Other tourism activities include camping, kayaking, diving and naturalist cruises.

- *“Sierra La Laguna” Biosphere Reserve* - A huge natural reservoir for rare and unique species. The Reserve contains high mountains with temperate pines forests, running rivers, unique desert vegetation and tropical woodlands. Principal tourism activities include camping and hiking.

**Tourism Demand**

Of the approximately 800,000 tourists who visited Southern Baja California in 2003, approximately 10% visited protected areas (CONANP, 2003). Figure 2 shows an overview of the visitor profile information for the respective protected area. Principal activities include camping, kayaking and diving. The majority of visitors come from the United States and Canada.

Name / Indicator	Islas del Golfo de California	Bahia de Loreto	Sierra La Laguna	Cabo Pulmo	Vizcaino
Approximate Number of Visitors/Year	25,000	34,490	4,000	6,000	22,500
Average Length of Stay	2.5 days	2.2 days	4 days	3 days	3 days
Principal Countries of Origin	USA, Canada Japan, Europe	USA, Canada	Mexico	USA, Canada	USA, Mexico
Principal Activities	Camping, kayaking, diving, naturalist cruises	Camping, kayaking, diving, naturalist cruises, sports fishing	Camping, hiking	Diving, wind surfing, sports fishing	Whale watching, archaeological visits

source: CONANP, 2003

**Figure 2: Visitor profiles for the protected areas of Southern Baja California, Mexico**

### Islas del Golfo de California Pilot

The initial pilot for the Southern Baja California project was implemented at the “Islas del Golfo de California” protected area in the city of La Paz, the main access point for the reserve. The reserve was chosen due to the rapid growth of tourism and because of its proximity to the city of La Paz, where both the regional headquarters of the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) and the nonprofit Niparajá are located.

The primary tourism destination within the reserve is Espíritu Santo Island. A map showing the location of the island in relationship to city of La Paz is shown in Figure 3. The most popular tourism activity in the reserve is diving, as is shown in figure 4. Visitor primarily come from the US or Canada. A breakdown in the country of origins is shown in Figure 5.



Figure 3: Map of Isla de Espíritu Santo and the city of La Paz

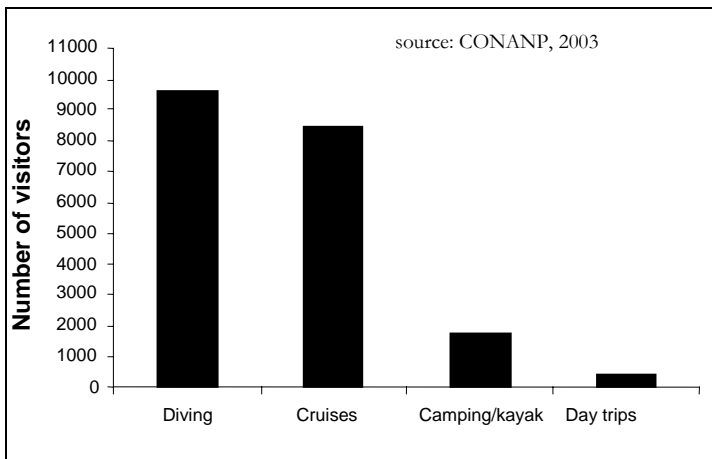


Figure 4: Principle tourism activities at Isla de Espíritu Santo

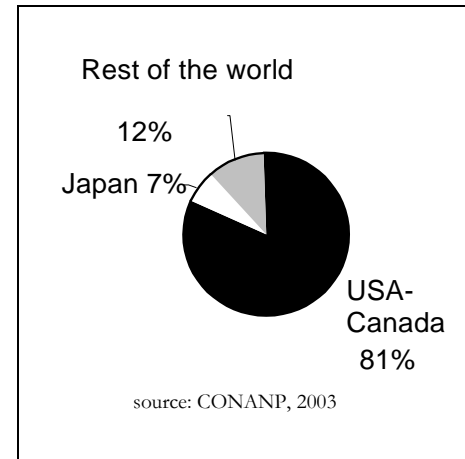


Figure 5: Country of origin for visitors to Isla de Espíritu Santo

### The Mandatory Entry Fee Program

Visitors to Mexico’s protected areas pay a mandatory entry fee in order to visit the reserves. The fee program was established in 2002 at an initial rate of 104 pesos (about US\$10) per person per day. However, because this amount caused considerable disagreement among tour operators, the fee was not collected until the amount was adjusted to 20 pesos (about US\$2) in 2003. The fee level was set by the Instituto Nacional de Ecología (INE) which conducted a visitor survey, mainly in southern Mexico, prior to setting the amount (López, 2005).

Once the fee is paid, visitors receive a yellow wristband which they must wear while visiting the reserve (see Figure 6). Visitors pay the fee either to the tour operator who accompanies them to the reserve or directly to CONANP if they visit the reserve on their own. Tour operators purchase the wristbands by depositing money into the appropriate federal account at the bank. Only independent visitors pay CONANP cash which is in turn deposited in the same federal account.



**Figure 6: Visitors receive a wrist band as proof of payment of the reserve entrance fee (right). Tour operators buy the bands in bulk from CONANP (left).**

The money first goes to the federal government. After a delay of approximately one month, the money is then transferred to CONANP. CONANP's policy is to return the money to the protected areas that generated the income or at least to the region where it was generated. Because the money generated by the Southern Baja California system is a comparatively small amount, the money is returned to the same protected area from which it was collected.

The fee system is the same throughout Mexico, with some variations depending on the circumstances of each region (López, 2005). However, it is unclear how the income generated by the fee relates to the actual costs to the protected area of managing tourism, or how closely the fee responds to visitor willingness to pay.

## IV. DESIGN PHASE

In the design phase of the project, the following steps were used to determine the appropriate revenue generating mechanism, fee level, and method of implementation for the site.

- 1) Determine the fair market value of the fee level and structure
- 2) Assess the cost of tourism management at the site
- 3) Conduct a stakeholder analysis

These steps are common to the process used at the other project sites in Belize and Bolivia. The objective of these steps was to meet the goals of the of the tourism user fee initiative, which include the following:

- Cost recovery, which involves generation of sufficient revenue to cover part or all of tourism's financial costs (e.g., construction and maintenance of a visitor center, signposting, impact monitoring).
- Generation of "profit," with the excess of revenue over cost being used to finance traditional conservation activities (at the destination or at other sites).
- Generation of local business opportunities, by the earmarking of fees to enhance site or experience quality.
- Provision of maximum opportunities for learning and appreciation of the natural resource, which may also involve low fees for nationals.
- Visitor management to reduce congestion and/or ecological damage, which would involve fees high enough to influence visitor behavior.

Below is a description of what occurred for each of the three steps of the design phase.

### **Step 1: Determine the Fair Market Value of the Fee Level and Structure**

After the initial pilot site of the Baja project was selected, the first step in the methodology for designing the appropriate mechanism and fee level was to determine the fair market value of visiting the site. This was accomplished by conducting a price-responsiveness survey at five protected areas across the Southern Baja region that have major tourism activity, including Loreto Bay, Islas del Golfo, Cabo Pulmo, Cabo San Lucas, and Vizcaino. A total of 311 individuals were surveyed from across the five sites.

Results from the pre-test survey summarized in the diagram below (Figure 7) indicated that the majority of visitors were willing to pay considerably more than the required \$2 fee. The diagram also shows that a voluntary donation program was the preferred means of contributing and could produce increased contributions. This reference should also be interpreted with some caution, however, because due to the relatively small sample size, the result was not statistically significant.

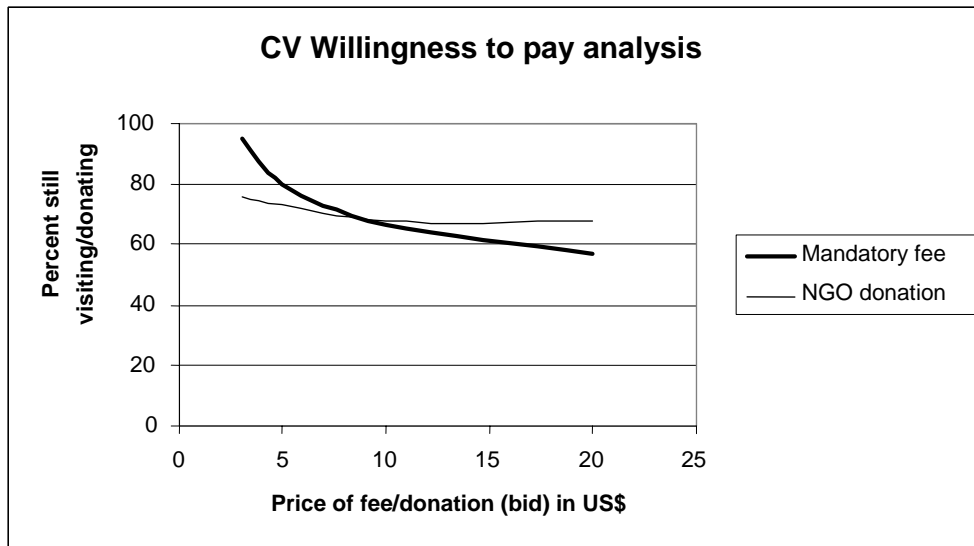


Figure 7: Contingent valuation (willingness to pay) analysis

*Donation program selected as a complement to the mandatory fee*

During the design phase, it was determined that the mandatory \$2 per person per day entry fee was legally fixed at a national level. Therefore, an increase in the fee at the reserve, which was recommended at the pilot site in Bolivia, would not be possible without a change in national law. Yet because the price-responsiveness survey indicated that visitors were as willing to make a donation as they were to pay a mandatory fee, a visitor donation mechanism was chosen as an alternative means of generating additional income for the site.

**Step 2: Assess the Cost of Tourism Management at the Site**

The second step in the design process was to assess the cost of tourism management at the site. The recovery of tourism management costs is one of the key objectives of generating income from tourism for protected areas (Lindberg, 2001). If the tourism fees generated at a protected area do not at a minimum cover the costs of providing visitor access to the site, then tourism is actually producing a net loss for conservation given that tourism activities themselves also have conservation impacts.

Data on the costs of providing tourism services at Islas del Golfo was available from the park's 2001-2005 Financial Plan and from an analysis presented by the park director to the World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa, in 2003 (Anaya, 2003). The analysis showed that 45% of the park's budget was spent on tourism related costs (see Figure 8 below).

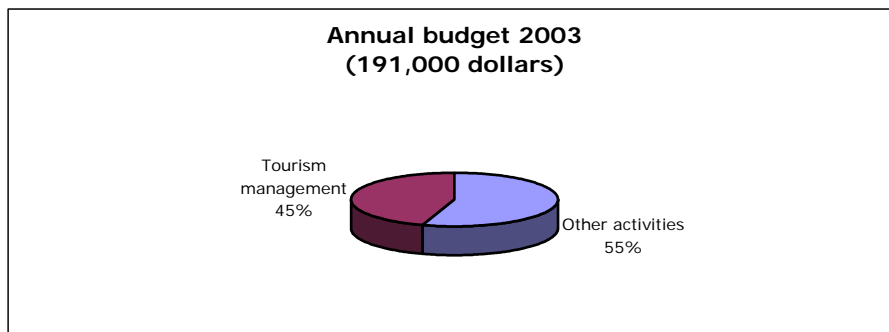


Figure 8: The distribution of the Islas del Golfo de California Reserve budget

Costs included the implementation of the tourism management plan, enforcement of the code of ethics for visitor behavior, and training of tour operators in proper guide behavior (Anaya, 2000a; Anaya, 2000b).

Although the mandatory fee program provides revenue to the park for providing these services, the amount generated is insufficient to cover the costs. The analysis showed that in 2003, tourism income covered only 27% of the tourism management costs of the park. In addition, data from the 5 year Financial Plan summarized in the diagram below (see Figure 9) shows the gap between operating costs and total projected income increasing over time. To close this gap, either an increase in the mandatory fee or a voluntary donation program was needed.

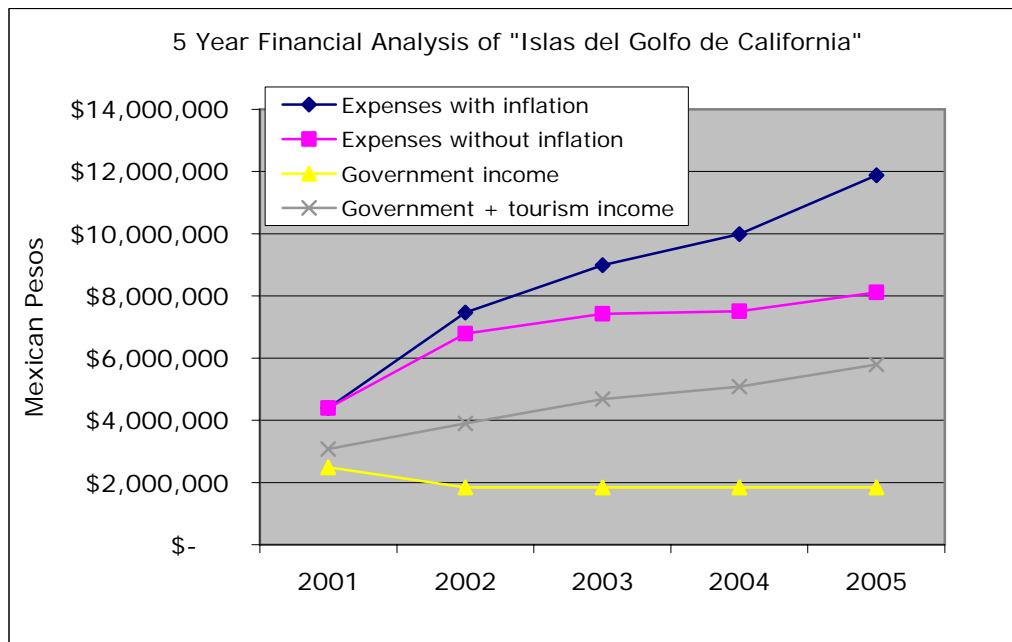


Figure 9: Five year financial analysis for the Islas del Golfo de California

### Step 3: Conduct the Stakeholder Consultation

Individual meetings were held with tourism sector representatives, including dive operators, kayak and camping operators, hotels, and cruise lines. In each meeting, the objectives of the program and the mechanisms for collecting revenue were presented. Feedback was actively sought and given.

In every case, the donation concept and mechanisms were met with enthusiasm. Some constructive criticism was provided. Most felt the program should invest in better patrolling and control of illegal activities at the reserve. Notes on the feedback from the different representatives are listed below.

#### *Dive Operators*

- Concerned that participation in the program might create price disadvantages in a highly price sensitive market.
- Important to be explicit about which activities the program will support

- Some concern about the transparency of the program and acceptance by local businessmen.
- Voluntary fees may be difficult to administer. Some would prefer a mandatory fee system to a voluntary one.
- Program brochures should be placed on inbound flights.
- No resistance from clients to paying current entrance fee and likely would pay more.

#### *Cruise Lines*

- Training during the existing CONANP guide training course should be provided for presenting Friends of Baja to cruise passengers.

#### *Hotels*

- Billing process does not facilitate EcoTariff.
- Expressed need for clearer information on which activities the program will support.
- Offered to place a box for receiving donations for Friends of Wild Baja.
- Ministry of finance rules could be problematic for collecting an eco-tariff. Implications would need to be reviewed by a tax accountant.

In addition to the feedback above, a study of the tourism sector of La Paz in 2002 found that 43% of tour operators interviewed would support paying a donation for conservation (López, 2002). While the study and feedback showed that support for the donation program was not universal, enough support existed to launch the program.

### **Funding the Baja California Pilot Program**

Funding for initiating the pilot donation project at Southern Baja California was provided by the Alex C. Walker Foundation and the USAID/TNC Parks in Peril Program. These funds paid for the expenses of designing the pilot project, including background research, administering the price-responsiveness survey at 5 different protected area sites, and conducting stakeholder consultations. It also paid for the initial expenses of implementing the program, including producing the program's promotional/educational brochures and producing the key chains used in the dive/whale watching tag revenue generation mechanism described in the following section.

## V. IMPLEMENTATION PHASE AND RESULTS

This section describes the way in which the program was implemented. The program management, revenue mechanism, and results following the first year of the project are explained.

### **Program Management**

Once a visitor donation program was selected during the design phase as the structure for the Baja pilot project, an organization had to be selected to run the program. Unlike the project sites in Bolivia in Belize where the entry fee was mandatory and administered by the park management, visitor donations had to be collected by an organization independent from the government.

One possibility that was explored was to integrate the program with the Gulf of California Conservation Fund (GCCF) which was being developed by the Fondo Mexicano and supported by Lindblad Expeditions. After initial conversations, however, it was determined this was not a good match since the focus of GCCF was on the Sea of Cortez and was not appropriate for targeting the specific protected areas selected for the program.

Instead, it was decided that the donation program should be managed by Niparajá, a Mexican nonprofit and conservation partner based in La Paz. A local structure would allow for more local participation in the decision making process which in turn would create more local support for conservation, and also more credibility and transparency.

To maintain the independence of the donation program from the rest of the organization, a separate fund was created within Niparajá in 2003 known as FOSANP (Fondo Sudcaliforniano para las Areas Naturales Protegidas) or Southern Baja California Protected Areas Fund. FOSANP was set up to have its own board of governors made up of representatives of the various stakeholders of Islas del Golfo including the Conservancy, Niparajá, CONANP and tour operators.

The decisions about how revenue would be allocated are made by the FOSANP board. Based on the objectives of supporting the urgent conservation need of Las Islas del Golfo reserve and maintaining the self-sufficiency of the donation program, the board agreed that the funds collected from donations would be distributed in the following fashion:

- 15% retained by Niparajá as overhead for administering the program
- 20% allocated as emergency funding for the reserve such as in providing much needed capital for boat repairs or other unexpected expenses
- 30% set aside for tourism related projects, such as signs for trails, communication campaigns or visitor brochures
- 35% for protected area management, such as to cover staffing expenses or park guard patrolling

Any changes to this allocation have to be approved by the FOSANP board. This requirement ensures the various stakeholder groups represented by the board have the opportunity to participate in the decision process. The multi-stakeholder process also serves to strengthen the

credibility of the fund as an autonomous organization as well as to provide assurance of its transparency.

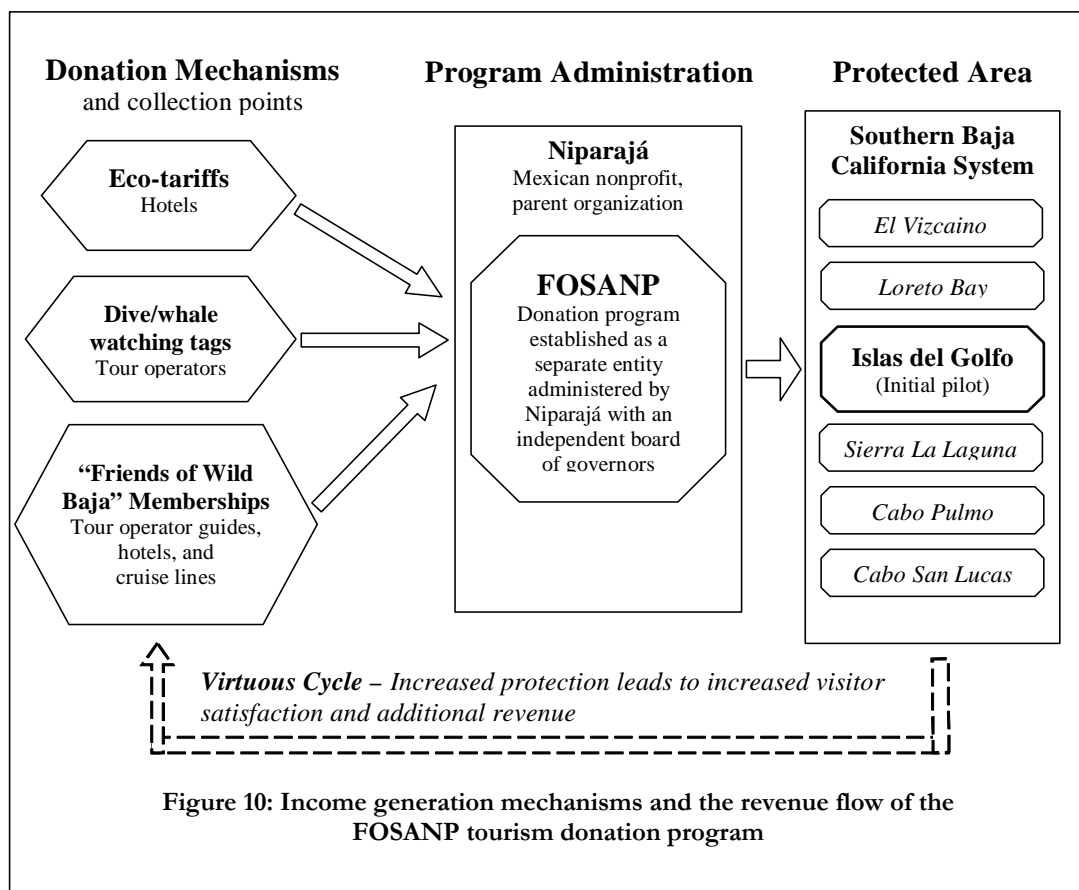
### Income Generating Mechanisms

Three collection mechanisms were proposed as the most effective for generating revenue for Islas del Golfo through tourism donations following consultation with the key stakeholders.

The selected revenue generating mechanisms were:

- Eco-tariffs at hotels
- Scuba dive/whale watching tags
- “Friends of Wild Baja” membership

Figure 10 below presents an overview of the three mechanisms as well as a graphical representation of how the FOSANP administration was implemented. Below, each of the three mechanisms is described.



a) *Eco-tariffs at hotels*: A voluntary additional room charge or “eco-tariff” at hotels in La Paz. Upon check-out, visitors would pay an additional fee of US\$2.00 or higher on top of their hotel bill. The money would be collected by the hotels and then turned over to FOSANP on a regular basis. The approach would require a high degree of cooperation from the hotel owner/manager, however, once implemented the system would automatically generate substantial donations for conservation management on a regular basis.

This ‘voluntary room-tax’ or conservation surcharge mechanism is already being successfully applied at various hotels around the world, such as at Crown Hotels in Hong Kong which collect donations for WWF (Sherman, 2003). The mechanism is also similar to programs that exist in some countries to earmark a percentage of their mandatory hotel and restaurant taxes to support conservation, such as in the Turks and Caicos Islands (Davis, 2001).

b) *Dive/whale watching tags*: A voluntary fee that would be collected from divers and whale watchers by tour operators. The initial idea was that the program would supply tags for attaching to divers’ BC’s which tour operators would then encourage their clients to purchase. Given the fact that mandatory dive tags are frequently sold at marine reserves and are familiar to dive tourists, such as at the Bonaire Marine Park, the idea was that a tag system could also generate revenue if offered on a voluntary basis.

The method used to implement this mechanism was to place key chains and donation boxes in the sales offices of participating tour operators (see Figure 11). Key chains were chosen in place of BC tags in order to have one tag that could be offered to all types of visitors (e.g. divers, whale watchers, kayakers). A donation box was chosen as the method of collecting revenue in response to tour operators wanting to avoid the accounting responsibilities and possible tax implications of handling donations directly.

c) *“Friends of Wild Baja” membership program*: Visitors would be encouraged to join to support the conservation of the park they visited. To gain support, tour guides would be trained to pitch the importance of conservation and the need for additional funds during their tours and invite their clients to join by providing application forms for on the site sign-up. Examples of other “Friends of...” organizations which raise funds for parks and other public attractions (e.g. museums) have been successfully applied in many cases. For example, in the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador, a “Friends of Galapagos” network has been established that consists of seven organizations dedicated to supporting conservation in the park.

To promote the membership program, a brochure was produced that described the



Figure 11: Donation box and key chains at a local tour operator office

protected areas of the region and gave an overview of the donation program and its goals. In addition to distribution by tour operators, the brochure was intended to be given to hotels and cruise line operators to leave in guest rooms. A website for FOSANP ([www.fosanp.org](http://www.fosanp.org)) was created as an additional promotional tool for providing visitors more detailed information and to reach a broader audience.

### **Challenges Faced during Implementation**

During the implementation process, the project faced a number of challenges that reduced the amount that was collected. Approximately US\$2,000 in donations were received the first year.

One of the most significant challenges encountered was that Mexican tax law made it difficult for hotels to collect donations from guests on FOSANP's behalf. As a result, the "ecotarrif" mechanism of receiving donations via hotels, which had been expected to generate the largest share of the fund's donation revenue, could not be implemented. To resolve this issue, Niparajá contracted a consultant to design an accounting system and draft a supporting contract agreement that would enable the hotels to transfer donation revenue from their own accounts to FOSANP on a periodic basis. By spring of the following year, Hotel la Concha, one of the top-end hotels of La Paz, signed a contract establishing the donation agreement thus initiating the eco-tariff mechanism. The agreement has since been used as a model to start the mechanism at Hotel Los Arcos and other top hotels in La Paz.

The program had a similar problem with engaging tour operators to initiate the mechanism of selling dive/whale watching tags. To avoid the administrative burden of collecting donations directly from their clients, tour operators decided this mechanism would be best implemented by placing donation boxes and key chains (as opposed to tags) by the sales counter. This more passive method of soliciting donations has produced less than expected. Furthermore, tour guides have not been effective at encouraging a significant number of tourists to participate in the "Friends of Wild Baja" membership campaign.

Aside from challenges associated with implementing these mechanisms, another challenge the program faced in year one was that Niparajá had a change in leadership early on in the year. During a very busy transition stage, much of the oversight of FOSANP was delegated to a newly hired program coordinator. While highly capable, the coordinator did not have the management authority or knowledge of the tourism industry that was needed to negotiate strategic alliances with hotel and tour operator partners. Later in the year, the Niparajá director was able to devote the attention needed to advance the program at which point significant progress was made.

## VI. KEY SUCCESSES

By the end of year one, FOSANP made significant progress toward becoming established as a long term program for generating income through visitor donations. Although the amount of money collected fell short of initial expectations, significant organizational advances were made in support of its long term success.

- **Board of directors recruited.** To ensure its accountability and promote the program's credibility among stakeholders, a board of directors was recruited and formed consisting of representatives from the major stakeholder groups. This included representatives from the private tourism sector, academia, NGOs, the civic community, and the protected area system staff.
- **Produced informational material and website.** Educational brochures were designed and printed in both English and Spanish to educate readers about the conservation value of the Baja protected areas and to inform readers about the program's strategies and activities. Also available on the web, the materials educate visitors and also serve as a fundraising tool.
- **Donations accepted on-line.** To more easily facilitating donations from past and potential visitors, a system of soliciting donations on-line was established (as shown in the Appendix.)
- **Formed partnerships with hotels.** Relationships were formed with top-tier hotels in La Paz, the gateway city to the Islas del Golfo reserve. An 'eco-tarif' donation mechanism that enables the hotels to collect donations from their guests was established with the aid of a tax consultant in collaboration with hotel administrators.
- **Formed partnerships with tour operators.** Partnerships have been forged with various tour operator businesses (see the Appendix for list of operators shown on the FOSANP web site.) In addition, a dive tag donation mechanism was created that encourages customers to make additional voluntary contribution toward conservation.
- **Matching funding for tourism donations.** In collaboration with other Mexican organizations in support of conservation related to tourism, FOSANP negotiated an agreement with the Fondo Golfo de California to provide a one-to-one match for visitor donations. The Fondo Golfo de California will also include FOSANP in the communication materials it presents on Lindblad Expedition cruises.
- **Obtained funding for administrative costs.** To pay for the on-going costs to manage the program, FOSANP successfully received a grant from the Packard Foundation to cover staff, operations, and communications expenses. The grant has since been renewed a second year, allowing visitor donations to be spent exclusively on conservation activities at the reserve.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are several recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of FOSANP toward contributing to the long term sustainable financing of the protected areas of Southern Baja California.

### **1) Change the eco-tariff donation should be automatically included in the hotel bill.**

Presently, when guests check out of a hotel participating in the eco-tariff program, each guest is asked by the hotel clerk whether he or she would like to make a donation to FOSANP in support of conservation. Unless the guest chooses to “opt-in” to the program, no donation is collected.

To increase the total amount collected, FOSANP should consider making the eco-tariff mechanism automatic, whereby a small donation (perhaps US\$1) is automatically charged to the room bill unless the guest specifically asks to be excluded or “opt-out” of the program. While each donation might be smaller than if guests were individually asked to contribute, the cumulative effect of receiving a smaller amount from nearly all guests would result in receiving more revenue. To determine which approach works best for their clientele, hotels should experiment with this approach to see if it is more successful.

### **2) Hire a tourism consultant to develop strategic alliances with the tourism sector**

The program should hire a local tourism sector ‘insider’ who would have a deeper understanding of tourism business dynamics. This expert would be better suited to address the difficulty the program has faced in successfully engaging tour operators in participating in donation collections.

- a) **Develop a new approach for implementing the dive/whale watching tags**  
The system of collecting voluntary dive/whale watching tags using a donation box and key chains has not been effective and should be redesigned.
- b) **Develop a workplan for engaging cruise line operators**  
Using the skills of the tourism insider, a program for more actively engaging cruise line operators should be developed.

### **3) Provide training to guides for raisings funds for the “Friends of Wild Baja” membership program**

A training program should be developed to teach guides how to better inspire tourists to donate to the “Friends of Wild Baja” program. With the proper training, tour guides will be able to better take advantage of the opportunity they have during the tour when both the benefits of conservation and the need for additional protection can be observed.

### **4) Expand the program to multi-site**

The FOSANP program is at a stage where it should begin the process of supporting revenue generating mechanisms at multiple protected areas. Rather than wait until the donation mechanisms for Islas del Golfo have been fully refined, the program should begin the process of expanding opportunistically now. For example, in Cabo San Lucas, one of the major hotel owners is also on the board of FOSANP. The program should take advantage of this relationship to expand the application of the eco-tariff mechanism to other sites.

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## IX. APPENDIX: THE FOSANP PROGRAM WEBSITE (WWW.FOSANP.ORG)

The website provides educational and promotional information in English and Spanish.

**FOSANP**

- About Us
- Forum
- Chat
- Donation
- Video
- Gallery
- Companies collaborating with Fosanp
- Bulletin

**Fund for the Protected Areas in Southern Baja California**

**“Because we are part of nature”**

We invite you to join this effort to conserve the natural riches of Baja California Sur, Mexico.

Thanks to the beauty of its landscapes and the uniqueness and importance of the Gulf of California and the near shore Pacific, our state receives a big number of local and foreign visitors who have expressed their interest in contributing (by means of donations) to the conservation of the places that they visit.

**Board of Directors:**

- NIPARAJA A. C.
- La Paz tourism sector
- Loreto tourism sector
- Cabo San Lucas tourism sector
- Academic sector
- Civic community
- Friends of Cabo Pulmo
- Gulf of California Islands Flora and Fauna Reserve
- Loreto Bay National Park

[friendsofbaja@fosanp.org](mailto:friendsofbaja@fosanp.org)  
[FOSANP Brochure \( .pdf \)](#)

**Niparajá**  
Conservando la naturaleza

**The Nature Conservancy**  
Cuidando los ecosistemas y la vida silvestre

También somos parte

## The Visitor Donation Page of the FOSANP Program

Visitors may fill out a form to request to make a donation to sign up for membership.

Home

### Fund for the Protected Areas in Southern Baja California Sur

We thank you for your interest and donations to FOSANP. Please, fill out the blank and we will contact you.

Name:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Country: MEXICO

Phone :

E-Mail:

Our Natural Heritage

También somos

## The FOSANP Tourism Business Partnership Page

Tourism businesses participating in the FOSANP program are promoted on the site.



**FOSANP**

- About Us
- Forum
- Chat
- Donation
- Video
- Gallery
- Companies collaborating with Fosanp
- Bulletin

This Companies are supporting to FOSANP

- Baja Ferries
- THE CORTEZ CLUB AT LA CONCHA BEACH RESORT
- BAJA CAMP
- el ángel azul
- HOTEL Miramar
- ntp NAVERA TURISTICA del PACIFICO S.A. DE C.V.
- bar madero wines & coct [barmadero@hotmail.com](mailto:barmadero@hotmail.com)
- club fantamar Resort & Sports Center
- funbaja Diving & Eco Adventures



- BAJA OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES BOA BAJA - MEXICO [www.kayakbaja.com](http://www.kayakbaja.com)
- CARE4
- RESTAURANT NUEVO MUNDO LA PAZ, B.C.S.
- BAJA DIVING & SERVICE
- BAJA EXPEDITIONS®
- DES off road baja adventures
- SEA & ADVENTURES, INC. MAR Y AVENTURAS, S.A. de C. IN BAJA, MEXICO
- BajaQuest™
- La Posada de Engelbert Colonial Hotel on the Beach
- 

## The FOSANP Educational and Promotional Brochure

The brochure is distributed through tourism businesses in both English and Spanish.

**Parque Nacional Cabo Pulmo.**  
Se parte de la conservación del único arrecife coralino en el Golfo de California, hogar de innumerables especies de peces y sitio de anidación de tortugas marinas.

**Reserva de la Biosfera Sierra La Laguna.**  
Apóyanos en la protección de la única zona boscosa en el Estado. Considerada como una "isla" de vegetación en el entorno árido de la península, Sierra "La Laguna" es hogar de especies únicas y la cuenca hidrológica más importante de la región.

**Reserva de la Biosfera El Vizcaíno.**  
Únete a los esfuerzos de conservación del ANP más grande de México y patrimonio mundial-UNESCO. El Vizcaíno es una galería natural de arte rupestre, lugar de nacimiento de la ballena gris y hogar del berrendo.

**Área de Protección de Flora y Fauna Cabo San Lucas.**  
Colabora en la protección de espectaculares escenarios submarinos como las cascadas de arena y del refugio submarino de peces y visitantes ocasionales como las tortugas marinas y la ballena jorobada.

Al apoyar tu donación te vuelves parte de la solución y proteges nuestras áreas naturales.

Las futuras generaciones te lo agradecerán.

Por colaborar en el trabajo de la conservación, naturalmente ¡gracias!

Cualquier contribución cuenta en el trabajo de la conservación, ¡Gracias!

Tus hijos te lo agradecerán.

Gracias por apoyar la conservación del capital natural.

Gracias por apoyar la conservación de nuestro patrimonio natural.

[www.niparaja.org/fosanp](http://www.niparaja.org/fosanp)

Sociedad de Historia Natural Niparaja A.C. Feo. 1, Madero #389 entre Constitución y 5 de Mayo, Col. Centro. CP23000  
Tel y Fax e E mail Banamex 11-7146944

Diseño: Arián An. Cambio & Asociados. Fotografías: Ramón Castellanos. Archivo Isla del Golfo de California



TAMBIÉN NOSOTROS SOMOS PARTE DE LA NATURALEZA

**NUESTRO PATRIMONIO NATURAL**

Baja California Sur es reconocida a nivel mundial por su extraordinario patrimonio natural. Por esta razón, existen en el estado diferentes Áreas Naturales Protegidas (ANP) que tienen un fin común: conservar los ecosistemas y biodiversidad de la región. La conservación de los recursos naturales se ha convertido en una prioridad para cualquier país del mundo. México no podría ser la excepción, ya que es considerado uno de los países con mayor diversidad biológica en el planeta. Dada la relevancia de estas áreas para los Sudcalifornianos, los Mexicanos y el mundo, es necesario que todos colaboremos en su conservación.

**¿Cómo se protegen?**

El Fondo Sudcaliforniano para Áreas Naturales Protegidas de Baja California Sur (FOSANP) se ha creado para que todos nos sumemos a la conservación de nuestras ANP. La misión de FOSANP es conservar el patrimonio natural de Baja California Sur, complementando los recursos económicos existentes para reforzar las acciones de conservación en las áreas naturales protegidas en beneficio de los habitantes de la región, visitantes y las generaciones futuras. FOSANP es un esquema público-privado, administrado por la Sociedad de Historia Natural Niparaja, una organización local sin fines de lucro quien es la responsable de la recaudación, manejo, canalización y la aplicación de los recursos captados. Las ANP's beneficiadas serán responsables de la ejecución de los proyectos bajo la supervisión de un Consejo Directivo representativo de la sociedad local, The Nature Conservancy, sectores empresarial, académico y gubernamental de las ANP's, con el objetivo de garantizar la transparencia en el manejo del Fondo.

Tu donación es muy importante para realizar acciones urgentes de conservación en tus áreas naturales protegidas.

**ÁREAS NATURALES PROTEGIDAS DE BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR**



**Área de Protección de Flora y Fauna Islas del Golfo de California.**  
Ayuda a proteger uno de los últimos ecosistemas insulares mejor conservados en el mundo, lugar de numerosas especies que no se encuentran en otro lado del mundo y dependen de las islas para su reproducción y descanso.

**Parque Nacional Bahía de Loreto.**  
Contribuye en la protección del lugar Bahía de Loreto que alberga la mayor diversidad de mamíferos marinos en todo México. Es el reino de la ballena azul, el animal más grande del mundo, e importante área de pesca comercial y deportiva.



# NOTES

# NOTES

# NOTES



*The mission of The Nature Conservancy  
is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities  
that represent the diversity of life on Earth  
by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.*



**[nature.org/ecotourism](http://nature.org/ecotourism)**