An underwater photograph of two Vaquitas (Nannocalanus pacificus) swimming in the Gulf of California. The larger one is on the right, and the smaller one is on the left. The background shows greenish water and some red coral-like structures on the right.

Buy-outs and Buy-in

Saving the *Vaquita* in the Gulf of California



Presented at: A Private Sector Approach –
Conservation Agreements in Support of Marine Protection

Bainbridge Island, Washington

June 18, 2008

WWF and TNC in the Gulf of California



on the same page and in the same office



Network of Managed and Protected Areas

Sustainable Fisheries

Tourism & Coastal Development



Private land & water management tools

Fee simple acquisition

Conservation easements

Leases

Usufructs

Deed restrictions

Concessions

Incentive-based fisheries management tools

Catch shares

Other limited access privilege programs

Vaquita 101



- Smallest cetacean in the world
- Endemic to Mexican waters
- Restricted distribution in the northern Gulf of California
- Only about 150 vaquita left
- ~ 50 per year drowned in gillnets
- Slow reproduction rate (4% / year)
- ~ 700 legal fishermen
~ 500 (?) illegal fishermen

Complexity



- Conflict among stakeholders in the zone
- Weak and ineffective enforcement capacity
- Different Mexican government agencies with
 - different mandates
 - limited cooperation
- Historical tolerance of extensive illegal fishing
- Poorly defined property rights

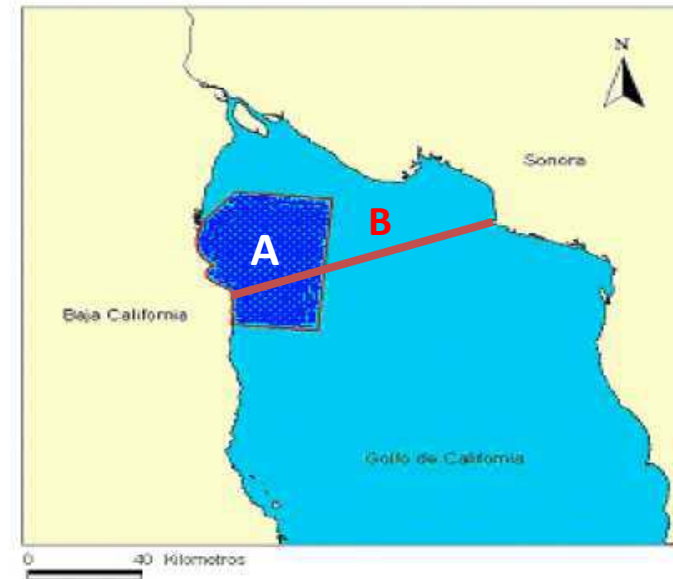
Challenges



- Getting the right mix of mechanisms: rent-out, buy-out, swap-out, public and private
- Creating the institutional arrangements for funding the private agreements
- Building a non-competitive NGO coalition to support the effort
- Raising an unbudgeted US\$100 million in difficult economic times
- Mobilizing broad international public and private concern while affirming Mexican government leadership on the issue

Recent developments

- Improvised buy-out of 60 fishermen for 2007-08
- Census of legal fishermen completed
- Zero tolerance for illegality announced
- 16 million dollar buy-out announced for 2008-09 (40% of the legal fishing effort)
- No-fishing zone being affirmed and enforced
- Several agencies committed to enhanced enforcement
 - Mexican Navy
 - Fisheries Commission (CONAPESCA)
 - Environmental Attorney General (PROFEPA)
- Broad international support (CEC/NAFTA, NGOs, US government, funders)
- Alternative gear testing



1 Biosphere reserve

2 Vaquita habitat polygon

*No-fishing zone =
Intersection of A and B*

Lessons



- **Urgency:** The perfect may be the enemy of success; solutions are messy.
- **Enforcement is key:** Without ways to keep retired nets out of the water and new fishing effort from leaking back in, the buy-out efforts will be wasted.
- **Social solutions are indispensable:** Gillnet elimination without meaningful compensation and/or transitions to alternative livelihoods is politically infeasible.
- **Durable management solutions must follow short-term fixes:** The political will to create and enforce a permanent ban on gillnets is the key to making this investment last.
- **Buy-outs require buy-in:** Mexican government leaders - from the presidency to local agents - have to buy in to the plan and work hard to implement it. I
- **BINGOs stand back:** International actors have to play more intelligent, nuanced and less visible supporting roles.

Learning hurts!

Not replicable as is:

This can't happen again like this, but we'll learn from this how to create enabling conditions for less messy replications.

