

Paper for Consideration by MACHC
Outcomes of the Gulf of Honduras (GOH) Project

Submitted by:	Secretariat of the IHO
Executive Summary:	This paper reports on the outcomes of the Gulf of Honduras (GOH) Project from an IHO perspective.
Related Documents:	nil
Related Projects:	nil

Introduction / Background

1. Gulf of Honduras (GoH) is a tri-national body of coastal and marine waters that includes portions of the areas of economic exclusivity of Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. The project was supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) as Implementing Agency of the GEF. The Central American Commission of Maritime Transportation (COCATRAM, by its acronym in Spanish) acts as executing institution for the IADB with support of the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD) as co-executing institution.

2. The Gulf of Honduras (GOH) Project aims at contributing to addressing the degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems, improving the control and prevention of contamination caused by maritime transport activities in the main ports and routes of navigation, improving the security of navigation to avoid grounding and discharges and reduce the outflow of contaminants originating from the land in the Gulf of Honduras.

3. The topic of maritime safety is of great importance to the Gulf. The risk of collision or grounding is significant. The area of Gulf is vulnerable to spills, due to limited navigable depths and the closed nature of the bay, in combination with strong, circular currents. For these reasons the necessity to improve safety in the marine routes, including infrastructure and communications systems, as well as to upgrade of the nautical cartography has all been recognised.

4. The project comprises five components:

Component 1: Development of regional capacity to prevent and control contamination from both marine and land-based sources.

Component 2: Development of a data information base for the Strategic Action Program.

Component 3: Improvement of safety in the maritime routes.

Component 4: Improvement of environmental management and reduction of risks in the regional network of five ports located in Gulf of Honduras.

Component 5: Program management

5. The Gulf of Honduras (GOH) project is a key activity for the development of the infrastructure for the provision of hydrographic services in Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. The project also exemplifies one of the fundamentals objectives of the IHO: cooperation between neighboring Hydrographic Services.

Analysis/Discussion

Hydrographic Support

6. The third component of the GOH project provided three outfits of hydrographic equipment - one for each country involved. The IHO, the Meso America - Caribbean Sea Hydrographic

Commission (MACHC) and the United States of America (USA) provided Capacity Building support to the GOH Project by means of visits, technical advice and trainings, namely:

- 2005: Technical Visits to Honduras and Guatemala
- 2006: Technical Visits to Honduras, Guatemala and Belize
- 2008: Technical Visits to Guatemala and Belize
- 2009: Technical Visit to Belize
- 2009: Hydrographic Training to Honduras, Guatemala and Belize
- 2010: Technical Visits to Honduras, Guatemala and Belize
- 2010: Hydrographic Training
- 2011: Gulf of Honduras Hydrographic Activity Implementation Plan - training on basic hydrographic survey and data processing

7. In addition to these specific activities, personnel from the three countries have participated in other training within the MACHC region since 2011. This demonstrates the significant commitment of the IHO to improving Hydrography and Nautical Cartography in the region.

Status report on hydrographic developments

8. In 2013 the Secretariat of the IHO sent letters to COCATRAM, Honduras, Guatemala and Belize seeking a status report on the progress that had been made as a result of the assessments, training and equipment provided under the GOH project.

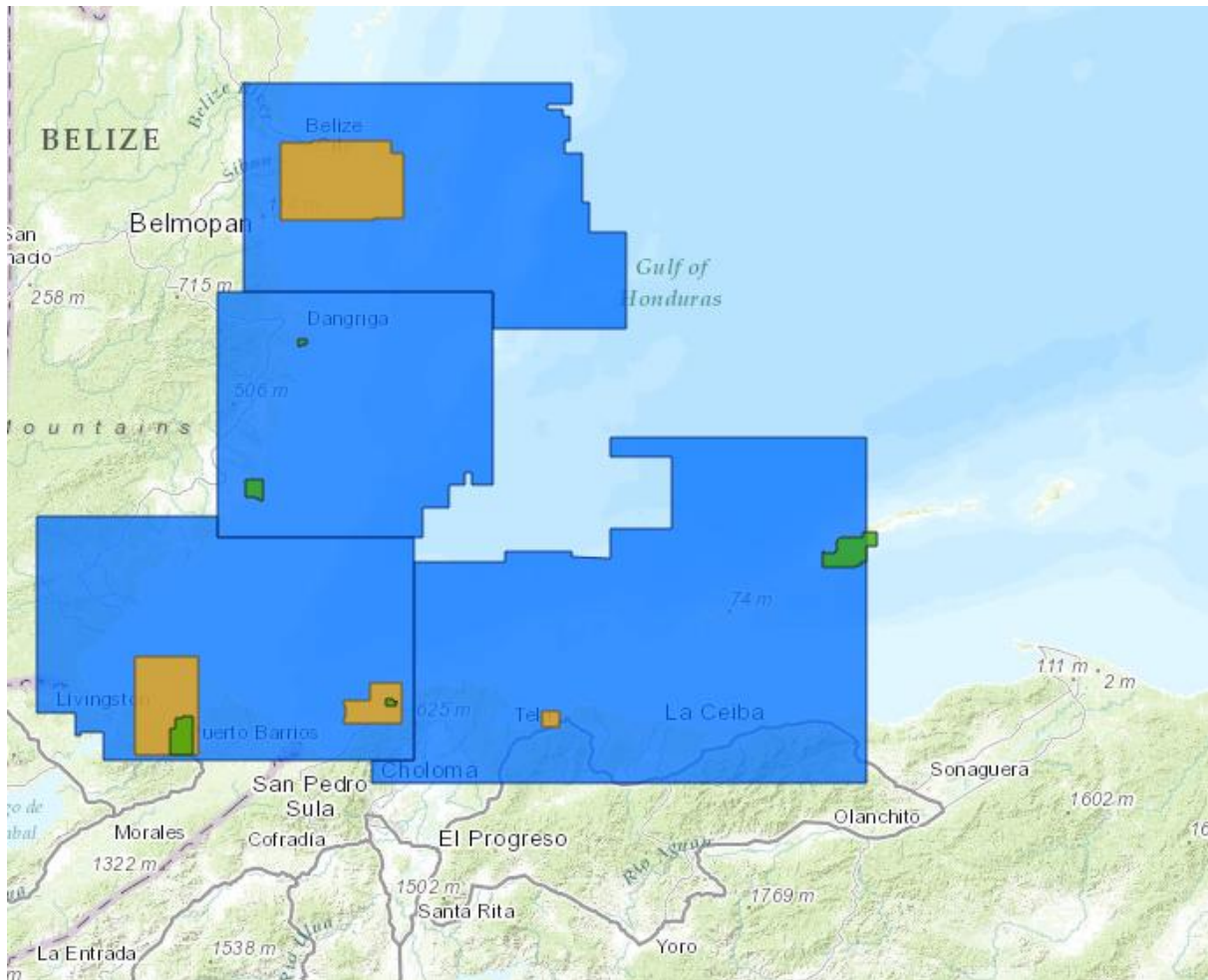
9. According to the replies received, it appeared that:

- There is no coordination for the execution of hydrographic surveys in the GOH for the purpose of updating nautical charts, a key component of the safety of navigation.
- Hydrographic equipment is not being used in an optimal manner nor in accordance with the IHO Guidelines and Standards.
- Not all hydrographic survey data is being sent to the relevant Primary Charting Authorities (PCA). In some cases no information is being sent to the PCA at all.
- Hydrographic survey data is not being made available for the full benefit of national infrastructure.
- Particularly in the case of Guatemala, the only IHO Member State in the GOH, the Hydrographic Office does not appear to be engaged in the planning of surveys in the GOH.

The Situation in 2015

Nautical charting

10. The GOH is covered by 13 Electronic Navigational Charts (ENC) in the Usage Bands (UB) 3 (coastal), 4 (approach), 5 (harbor) and 6 (berthing), shown in the diagram below:



11. An examination of the charts indicates the following situation regarding survey data provided by each of the countries:

- There is no data from Belize in the charts;
- A very small proportion of data collected by Guatemala is included in one of the charts;
- A small proportion of data collected by Honduras is included in three of the charts.

Maritime Safety Information (MSI)

12. The NAVAREA IV Coordinator (where the GOH is located) reports that the reporting of MSI is very limited in the region and some relevant information may not have been promulgated in the region.

13. The NAVAREA IV Coordinator also reports the following for each of the countries:

- Belize: there is no Point of Contact (PoC) and no MSI has ever been received by the Area Coordinator;
- Guatemala: Lt Alejandro Raxon Herrera (Navy) is the nominated PoC. He attended an MSI training course in 2013; and
- Honduras: Mr Javier Diaz Mendoza (Empresa Nacional Portuaria) is the nominated PoC. He attended an MSI training course in 2013.

Conclusions

14. The IHO, the MACHC and the USA have been working with COCATRAM, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras for the development of hydrographic services in support of the GOH Project. However, there seems to be limited use being made of the resources that have been provided to the three countries in the GOH. If this is the case, it is not a good outcome for the capacity building effort and support that has been provided.

Recommendations

15. In order to ensure the success of the GOH Project and to assist each of the recipient countries to further develop their hydrographic services to meet their SOLAS Convention obligations and to support national infrastructure development, the following matters need to be considered by the recipient States and addressed urgently:

- the plans for the continuation of the project;
- the development of a Marine Spatial Database Infrastructure and how that can benefit each country;
- the status of the maintenance and support of the hydrographic equipment provided in each country;
- the level of cooperation between the countries in the GOH across the common body of water;
- the level of national coordination between stakeholders being achieved in each country;
- the existence of a regional coordination body for hydrographic activities and the existing joint plans for hydrographic surveys;
- the process by which surveys are processed and forwarded to the Primary Charting Authorities to maintain the existing and future nautical charts;
- the level of awareness of the importance of MSI and the establishment of efficient mechanisms for the reporting of relevant information; and
- confirmation of the relevant points of contact in each country for the Project and for MSI.

Action Requested

16. The MACHC is invited to:
- a. note this report
 - b. invite COCATRAM to provide an annual report to the MACHC and to the Secretariat of the IHO on the status of the GOH Project
 - c. invite Belize, Guatemala and Honduras to consider the recommendations above and provide feedback to the MACHC and to the Secretariat of the IHO