



**2019 Baja California Sur  
Impact Expedition Log  
Advancing Collective Action  
for Cabo del Este**

**LEGACYWORKS**  
*group*

# Impact Expedition Participants and Donors

Special thanks to David Sherman, Mariana González and the entire staff of Lindblad Expeditions for all they did to make this journey successful.

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Amy Verbeten	Friends of the Teton River
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Matthew Weinstein	Baja Coastal Institute
David Yetman	<i>In the Americas</i> with David Yetman
Ben Wilder	NextGen Sonoran Desert Researchers, University of Arizona
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Photos by Alejandro Castillo, Martin Goebel, Paulina Godoy, Leonardo Gonzalez, James Honey, Sarah Hameed, David Leventhal, Jane Lillico, Megan Miley and Court Smith. Cover photo: Cacachilas Ranch overlooking the Sea of Cortez and Isla Cerralvo



The MV Sea Lion off the shore of Isla Cerralvo with the Baja California Peninsula in the background

## Foreword

This report attempts to capture the collective thinking and work of a unique group of committed individuals and organizations who shared time on land and sea in Cabo del Este, the extraordinary “East Cape” of Baja California Sur, in November 2019.

We hope this will be the first of many gatherings like it, and with many more people, to collectively address the challenge that unites us: ***How do we construct a model of regional development based on respect for nature and people alike, where one is not sacrificed for the other, where both are the foundation of the future?***

Cabo del Este is a remarkable place for this kind of community-driven change. It is both a resource-rich and resource-limited area. It harbors unparalleled natural and cultural history that remains largely untrammelled. Yet it is on the brink of profound change driven by mass tourism, resource depletion and unfettered conventional development.

Moving forward, the communities of the East Cape can follow the model of rapid, large-scale change with an uncertain and almost surely unsustainable future, where abundance is replaced by shortages, cooperation with competition, and harmony with conflict. Or, the people who love the East Cape can inspire and lead the way to a model that preserves and regenerates small settlements and communities that honor core natural and cultural values, and build resilient, regenerative economies from this fabric.

Fortunately, the region already counts on examples of people, places and enterprises that demonstrate that the new model works, and that nature and local culture can become the foundation for a new economy and a new kind of prosperity.

It is imperative that those who value this place continue to convene leaders to map a sustainable future, to inspire, educate, and support those working for people and nature. We believe the expedition contributed well to this need, and hope that many collaborative, community-driven initiatives are buoyed by it and in turn, contribute to further dialogue, reflection, ideas, and especially, action. All of us at LegacyWorks Group are fully committed to making that happen, in partnership with all of you.



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# Summary

For a few very special days in November 2019, 60+ engaged actors explored Baja California Sur's "Cabo del Este" region aboard the *MV Sea Lion*. The journey, organized by LegacyWorks Group with support from Lindblad Expeditions and a number of generous philanthropies and individuals, was designed to engage and harness the collective wisdom of participants.

Our aim was to articulate a vision and advance initiatives to achieve the "**geography of hope**" that has long inspired *sudcalifornianos*, the Mexican nation, and visitors from across the planet. The expedition was designed to:

**EXPLORE** to understand the region's natural and cultural riches and challenges;

**ENVISION** the possibilities of a resilient, regenerative future;

**DESIGN** collaborative strategies to enable change, capturing ideas and input in an Opportunity Matrix; and,

**ACT** on the highest impact opportunities to leverage human, financial and natural capital in service of a shared vision.

For all involved, the journey was a first. It was the perfect itinerant venue to gather a widely diverse group of local community members, Mexican and international philanthropists, scientists, artists, for- and non-profit leaders, expatriates, government and elected officials, and more. Each one of us was encouraged to physically, emotionally and intellectually immerse ourselves in the region and find pathways toward a vision of thriving communities and nature in Cabo del Este.

For many local activists, it marked a refreshing, or even watershed moment, in their long work to protect the area. For new visitors it created opportunities to deeply learn and offer their unique knowledge and energy to help in the efforts.

This document is a brief log of that journey, intended to record the observations, experiences, insights and commitments of our group, and to guide what we believe will be fresher, wiser, more collaborative and effective work.

## Gratitude

*The following individuals and organizations made special donations to LegacyWorks Group to make this expedition and our work possible:*

- » Our generous trip donor/ participants
- » Lindblad Expeditions
- » The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- » International Community Foundation (Candeo Fund)
- » Marisla Foundation
- » Overbrook Foundation
- » Baja Coastal Institute
- » Global Conservation
- » Regenerative Resorts
- » Mar Y Aventuras / Sea & Adventures



*Miguel León-Portilla (1926-2019)  
a beloved and distinguished  
Mexican historian and expert in  
pre-Hispanic culture, called the Baja  
California Peninsula "la geografía  
de la esperanza," expressing a  
sentiment that has been projected  
or sensed in this remote place for  
many generations.*



*When I came home the first thing I did was hug my daughter tightly as if hoping to convey in that hug all the energy, passion, commitment, beauty and kindness that I witnessed during these five days... a deep recognition [to you] for achieving an inclusive space, where good spirits were always maintained, and in which ideas and dreams were taking shape through collective dialogue.*

# Itinerary



**Day 1** »Wake and snorkel at Los Islotes' sea lion colony and reef, on the northern tip of Espiritu Santo Island, one of the region's prominent Natural Protected Areas and a powerful eco-tourism destination »Hear impressions and presentations on the geography, biology, community dynamics and culture, and personal experiences in the region »Hike and swim on Isla Cerralvo, a rarely-visited private island (also called Jacques Cousteau Island) featuring interesting endemism and hungry mosquitos »Tuck into the protected Bay of La Paz to overnight at the Municipal Dock as extremely late season Tropical Storm Raymond approaches.

**Day 2** »Remain in La Paz to wait out the storm; continue discussions about water, the role of government, sierra culture, local youth programs, long-term coastal monitoring of Cabo Pulmo, and more »Visit La Paz's malecon under grey and rainy skies for ice cream, margaritas, and shopping »Make new friends dancing into the night at what we think might be the *MV Sea Lion's* first Latin-dance party.



**Day 3** »Depart early with the threat of Raymond gone! »View impressive clouds and rare vibrant-green coastline from La Paz to Los Frailes, with personal narration of traditional fishing hamlet Boca del Alamo by native son and Los Barriles mayor ("delegado") Luis Lucero Meza »Cruise all afternoon, see Los Barriles' recent expansion and the recreational fishing fleet that in part anchors the local economy, and at La Ribera, the region's first large resort development, Costa Palmas, in the mouth of the state's second largest arroyo »Discuss in depth the ideas and initiatives, both new and existing, to preserve nature and culture in the fast-changing region.



**Day 4** »Anchor at Los Frailes south of Cabo Pulmo and split up to snorkel/dive in Cabo Pulmo's protected waters or explore Santiago's oasis and Sol de Mayo ranch, which has been stewarded continuously by one family since the 1700s. The Santiago group hiked to the canyon waterfall, met local market partners and lunched at El Palomar hotel »Reboard the boat in La Ribera »Welcome local Cabo Pulmo guests and enjoy a local meal provided by the community.

**Day 5** »Wake at Puerto Los Cabos and make our way home with new friends and a sense of hope and commitment.

# EXPLORE experiences and dialogue to reveal opportunity

The expedition began with shared discovery. ***What makes Cabo del Este and Baja California Sur's southern tip a place long-recognized and appropriately valued as a "last, best place"?***

Conversations on the porch with multi-generational *rancheros*, reflections from fishers aboard their *pangas*, presentations in the ship's lounge, hikes, diving and snorkeling, and many formal and informal encounters between unusual travel companions revealed a rich and complex picture of Cabo del Este:



» **The tectonic, evolutionary and ecological history fosters unusual natural diversity and endemism (species found nowhere else).** Those forces, along with a harsh climate and distance from cities, have shaped small rural communities that have lived in relative isolation and balance with nature for centuries.

» **Natural diversity ranges from coral reefs and coastal mangrove forests, to dense desert assemblages of flora with astounding micro-endemism, to pine-oak forests in the sierras.** Each of these ecosystems contributes to the others through complex inter-relationships. As an example, the water that falls near the top of the Sierra de La Laguna drives sediment and nutrients down arroyos that build the beaches and feed the microbiota that drive the remarkable productivity of the Gulf of California.

» **There is an evident pride and sense of place that connects the region's small, close-knit rural communities;** whether rancherías focused on cattle and goats in the canyons above Santiago or fishing hamlets in Boca del Alamo or Cabo Pulmo. There is a growing desire to both preserve the best of the past and transition to better, more stable and secure livelihoods for the future.

» **The threats from mass tourism and mega-resort development steadily moving north from the world-renowned destination resort of Cabo San Lucas are alarming.** They are rapidly changing the landscape, land ownership patterns, and the availability of resources (e.g. water) for local citizens, now and into the future.



# EXPLORE experiences and dialogue to reveal opportunity

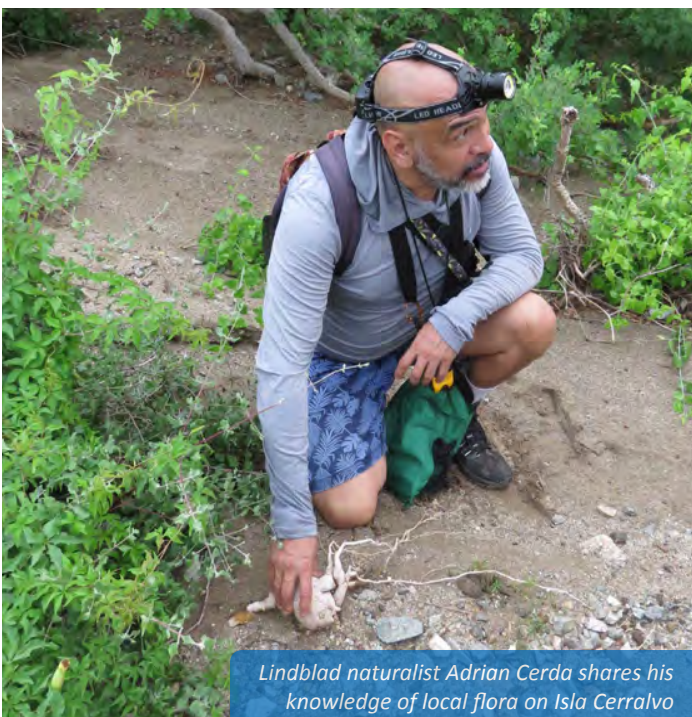
- » **In contrast to these daunting threats, powerful “Hope Spots” stand out as beacons for a new socio-economic development model.** Cabo Pulmo has become an international example of the potential to move from poverty and environmental depletion to restoration, regeneration and abundance. In Santiago, in Los Barriles, in La Ventana, in Boca del Alamo and many other communities, visionary leaders and citizens’ groups are working to shape a different version of development.
- » **Cabo del Este is a “SYSTEM”. We need ALL the players and interests in the region** to understand how it works, what implications there are for communities and the environment of a variety of potential futures, and how we can affect that “system” for a better future.
- » **The collective power of diverse people, thoughtfully convening around a common concern, holds tremendous - perhaps heretofore unrecognized - potential to create new futures for Cabo del Este.**



Snorkelers getting ready to swim with the sea lions at Los Islotes



A school of big eyed jacks seen by snorkelers in Cabo Pulmo



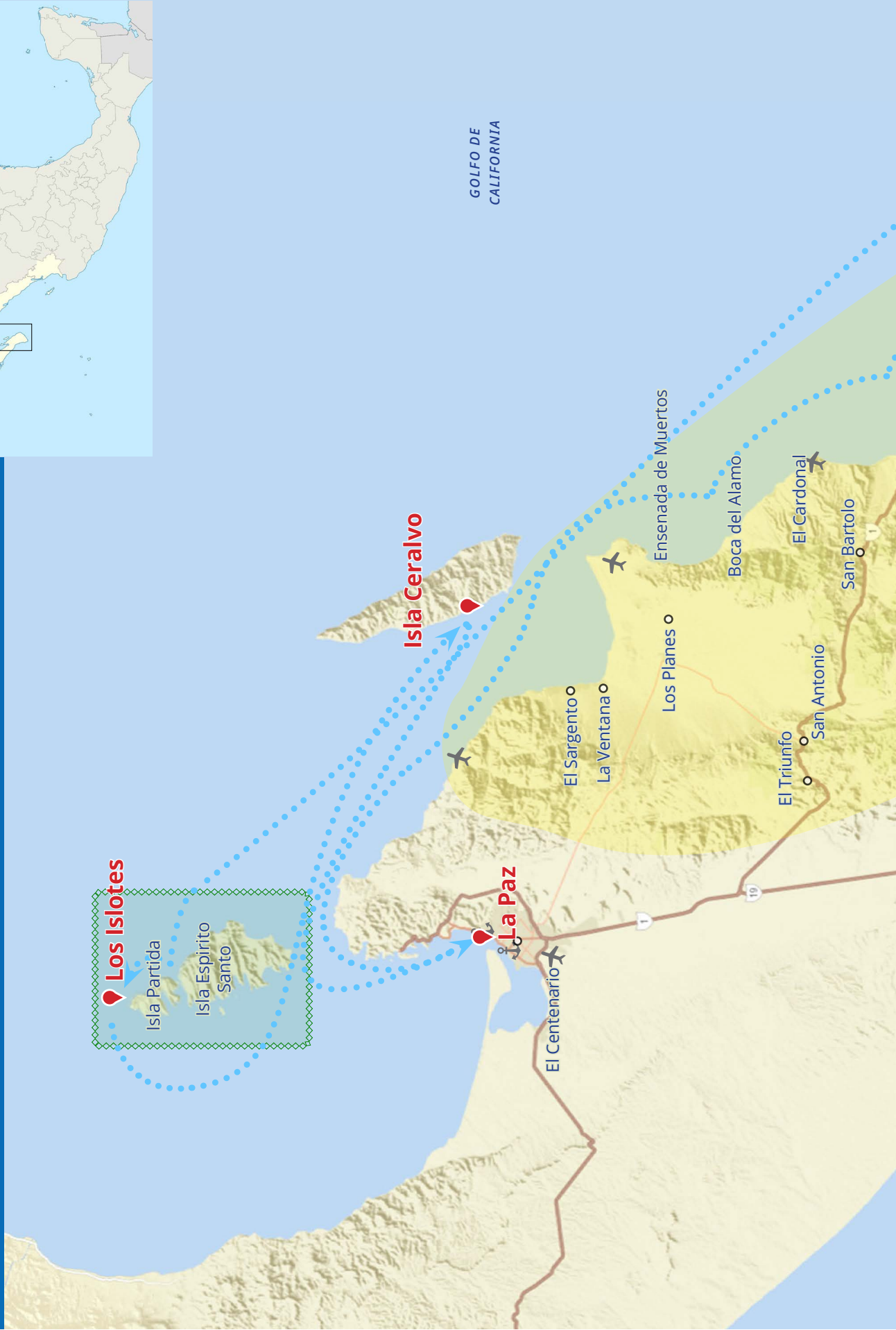
Lindblad naturalist Adrian Cerda shares his knowledge of local flora on Isla Cerralvo



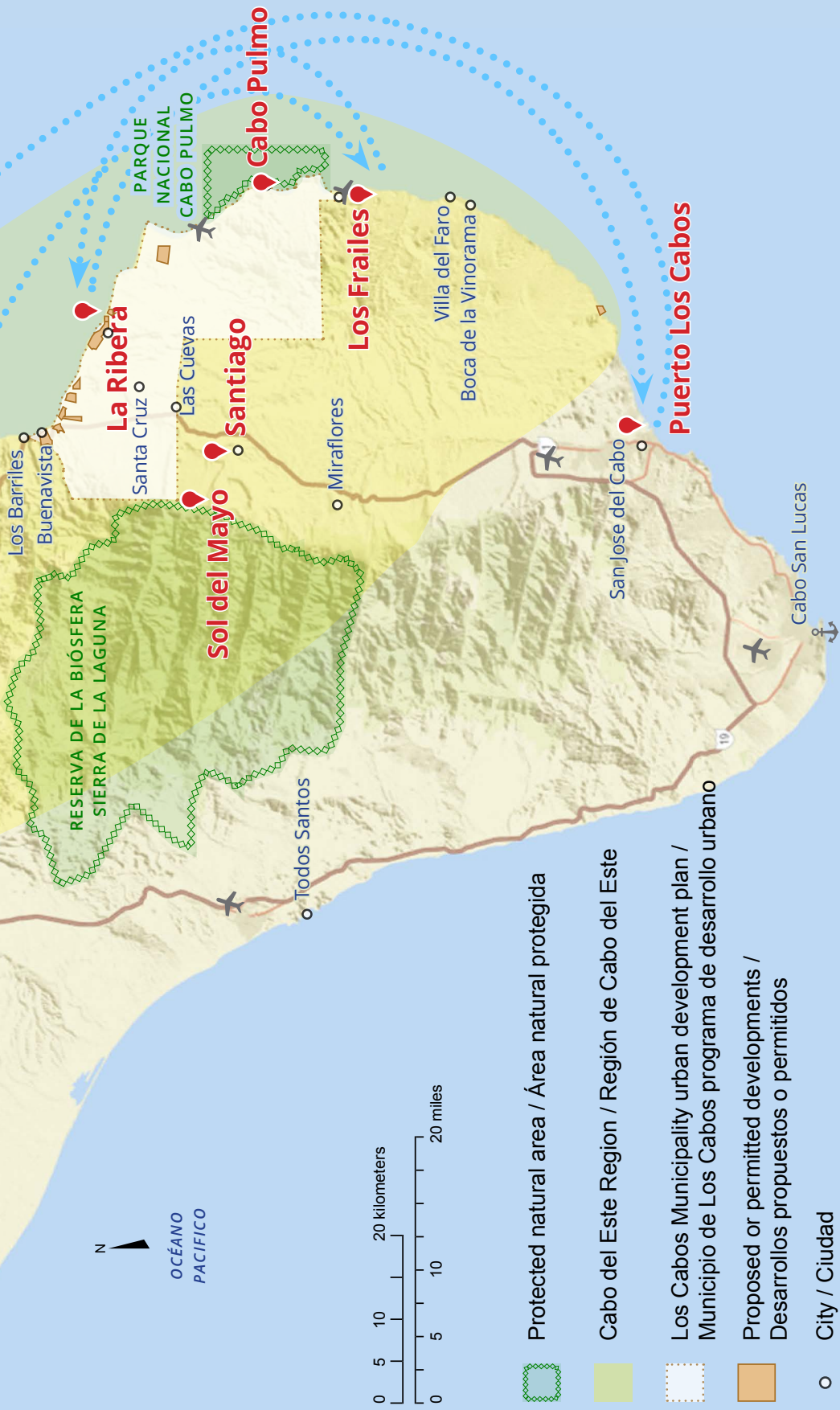
*I loved the collection of people and perspectives. The common interest, of course, was conservation and development leading to sustainable/resilient ecosystems and communities. The diversity of expertise, experience, and perspectives on the boat made for rich conversation and deeper investigation of the context, challenges, and opportunities. It was also great to have the time and space to play as well as work with this fantastic group.*

— EXPEDITION PARTICIPANT

# East Cape Expedition / Expedición en Cabo del Este Baja California Sur - November 15-20, 2019







- Approximate expedition route /  
Ruta de expedición aproximada
- Expedition destination /  
Destino de expedición

Protected natural area / Área natural protegida

Cabo del Este Region / Región de Cabo del Este

Los Cabos Municipality urban development plan /  
Municipio de Los Cabos programa de desarrollo urbano

Proposed or permitted developments /  
Desarrollos propuestos o permitidos

City / Ciudad

Airport / Aeropuerto

Marina / Marina

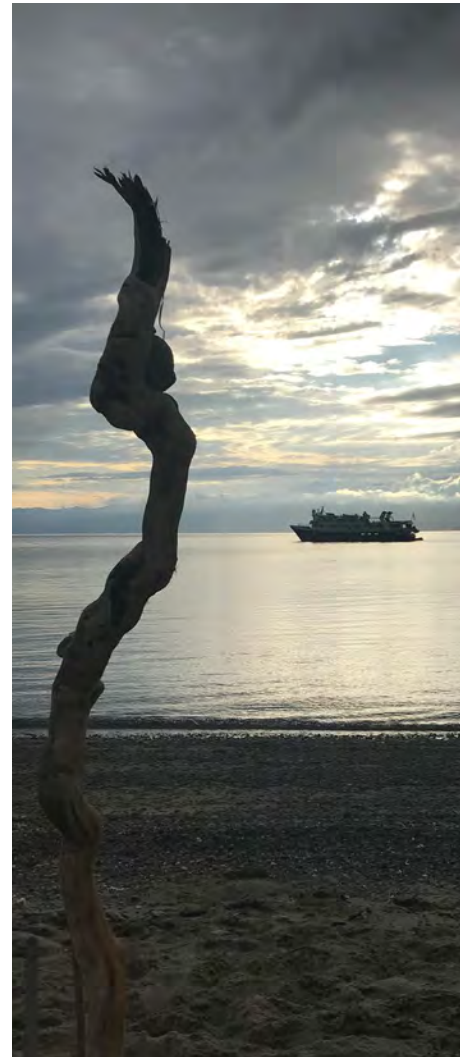
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 Lindblad  
Expeditions

# ENVISION the potential of a new vision for the region

The group enjoyed rare, quality time to dream about the future – ***Imagine you woke up 30 years from now and everything you wished for had WORKED, what would the place be like?*** We engaged in quiet reflection and group dialogue to help chart a common vision that energized and inspired the group. It is a vision of:

- » Retaining the small, familiar, land and sea-based cultures of Cabo del Este’s communities, with ample space for visitors and expatriate residents, all sharing a common culture of care and respectful, shared norms for inhabiting this place.
- » Continuing traditional activities of agriculture and fishing, while welcoming and growing new forms of tourism and economic activity that don’t deplete resources but rather enrich and regenerate them.
- » Advancing development with local communities serving as guides, owners, investors and stewards of the resources, such that their vision and capabilities are nurtured and expanded as thoughtful models of growth unfold.
- » Enabling powerful experiences in nature and community for the region’s youth, so they might become the guardians of its future.
- » Protecting and conserving the valuable natural resources and restoring the scars and “ghosts” of failed development.



## A draft VISION for Cabo Del Este

Inspired by this collective visioning, and by the group’s interest in working toward a shared vision for the region, LegacyWorks offers the following DRAFT as the jumping-off point for co-creation toward a SHARED Vision and Values Statement that diverse groups, businesses and individuals could collectively adopt to guide their work.

*We seek a new path that honors and embraces both nature and community as an indivisible whole, and supports local communities in their efforts to create a regenerative society and economy that cares for and protects both. We refuse to sacrifice the wellbeing of nature to benefit people, or the wellbeing of communities to protect the environment, and recognize that local communities and leaders are the key to achieving this vision. We envision diverse East Cape human communities working together; able to think beyond themselves to embrace the entire biological community and beyond one generation to many.*

# DESIGN an Opportunity Matrix of potential beneficial actions

In the spirit of learning and the open-ended nature of the best explorations, the group began to tackle the question **“How might we take actions to secure the vision?”**

The result is an inventory of thoughtful ideas that seek to build the bridge from the current reality of a region under threat to the dream of sustainable, regenerative communities 30 years from now.

This collection of ideas was compiled into an Opportunity Matrix - a tool LegacyWorks developed in order to inventory and organize actionable projects that represent the best options for progress towards a common vision. The matrix helps guide the process toward key collaborative projects that unite broad interest and energy, build trust, and are ready to be advanced by diverse leaders and groups as we take a collective action approach to the region.

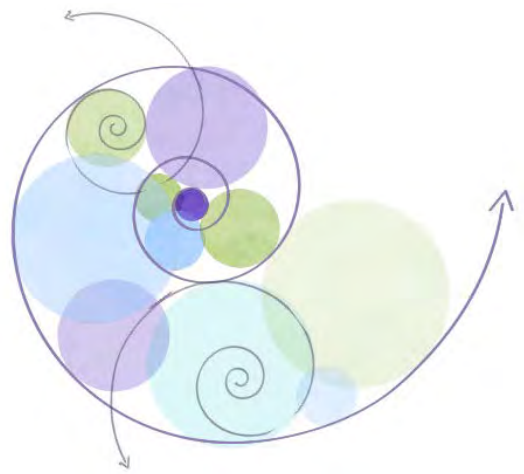
● Indicates High Impact  
● Indicates Impact

Project or Initiative	Community Driven Impact Areas														Readiness + Systems Change			
	Coalition Building	Leadership	Shared Regional Vision	Next Generations	Economic Development	Arts & Culture	Resilience	Openspace	Livable, Small Communities	Marine Ecology	Terrestrial Ecology	Water	Energy	Order of Change	Partners	Capacity	Change	
Support design of “El Nido” fishery reserve + surveillance + mapping of uses in Boca del Alamo.			●		●			●	●									
Construction of Cabo Pulmo MPA operation center.	●		●															
Santiago Oasis restoration and education center ... Connections between Sierra de la Laguna and Cabo Pulmo		●									●	●						
Photo documentation of Boca del Alamo area to be able to show change over time.			●															
Protecting habitat and corridors for pumas. Connectivity across the landscape.			●															
Arte para Todos - Beautification and Artification of Baja Sur's communities				●		●												
Link Boca del Alamo "Nido" idea with student engagement ... Students help to document and																		

View the opportunity matrix, trip handouts and group notes at [legacyworksgroup.com/expedition](http://legacyworksgroup.com/expedition)



At LegacyWorks Group we believe the change we need has to come through a community-driven approach. It happens through collaborative projects and initiatives that bring people together around a shared vision and purpose, working together under shared principles. No individual project, by itself, achieves the total change desired. Rather, each project contributes energy and momentum to the broader change process underway, and builds the capacity, relationships and critical trust needed to take on projects of increasing complexity and importance. This action-oriented approach thus yields direct immediate impact through each project while simultaneously building the capacity and creating the conditions needed for transformative change. We illustrate this change process as a spiral where each project and undertaking is a step towards change at the pace and scale needed.



For me, one thing is to think about the potential, and to feel it... and another very different and empowering is to see it... I thought, felt and saw the potential.

— EXPEDITION PARTICIPANT

# ACT on key projects and collaborations for 2020-2022

As the *MV Sea Lion* approached land and the once-rich fishing banks of Boca del Alamo – a picture framed by the unseasonable cumulus clouds anchored in the deep green of the Sierra Las Gatas – the group turned to conversation about how we might work as individuals, local groups, and multi-national networks to achieve the vision we collectively developed.

The process of selecting actions was based on the lists captured in the Opportunity Matrix, in an open, voluntary and self selective process. Travelers organized and dialogued around topics that interested them the most, and generated meeting records / action plans that are summarized below.

*LegacyWorks has specifically committed to focusing its efforts on these projects as high leverage points for achieving the Cabo del Este regenerative vision.*

View the opportunity matrix, trip handouts and group notes at [legacyworksgroup.com/expedition](https://legacyworksgroup.com/expedition).

## Selected Projects

- » Extend the Cabo Pulmo model
- » Engage developers and create a vision and guide for regenerative development
- » Promote smart water management
- » Expand transformative experiences and education for youth
- » Address transition financing
- » Convene continuous learning



*The shared experience of one project deepens trust and builds capacity and courage to do more together. Follow-on collaborations tackle bigger opportunities and bring in new partners, spawning new possibilities.*



Working session on the upper deck

# ACT on key projects and collaborations for 2020-2022

## Extend the Cabo Pulmo model

*Development needs to be done with tangible community values, new social enterprises, and protective measures that present a more positive, community-based, regenerative alternative to conventional development approaches.*

Luis Lucero Meza, a native of the Boca del Alamo fishing community and the mayor of Los Barriles, a major development node in the region, shared a vision that is growing in his community and that galvanized many on board. The challenge is to help Boca del Alamo achieve a vision inspired to a degree by their neighbors in Cabo Pulmo. They call their concept *El Nido* (The Nest): a fisheries sanctuary and eco-tourism reserve that protects and restores once-plentiful fishing and coral banks in one of the last remote communities along the coast.

Not only would it restore significantly impacted fisheries, but it could help alleviate the demand for reef diving/snorkeling that now threatens Cabo Pulmo. On land, there is interest in setting up some community-led “locks” to dampen or control unbridled development; to work from reefs to ridges, including the entire watershed.

Ideas were shared for using art and student science to inventory what’s there today and to inspire visions about what could be there in the future. The group discussed connecting with Santiago and its Oasis and Canyon cultures, and other similar towns, so communities support each other in the effort for change.



Luis Lucero Meza talks about his hometown Boca del Álamo

“

### *El Nido / The Nest*

*Today we begin a dream  
a particular dream  
a shared dream.*

*For in solitude I have lived and  
like the osprey in solitude,  
I've found my nest.*

*I have found a living ecosystem*

*To love*

*To conserve*

*To build*

*the ideas that are the path to  
diverse dreams,  
where we choose*

*life for the life of hopes to create  
the different activities in this  
Boca del Alamo nest:*

*To give life in the seabeds that will  
be shared by future generations.*

— ROGELIO ROSAS, 18/NOV/2019



Ben Wilder y Rogelio Rosas

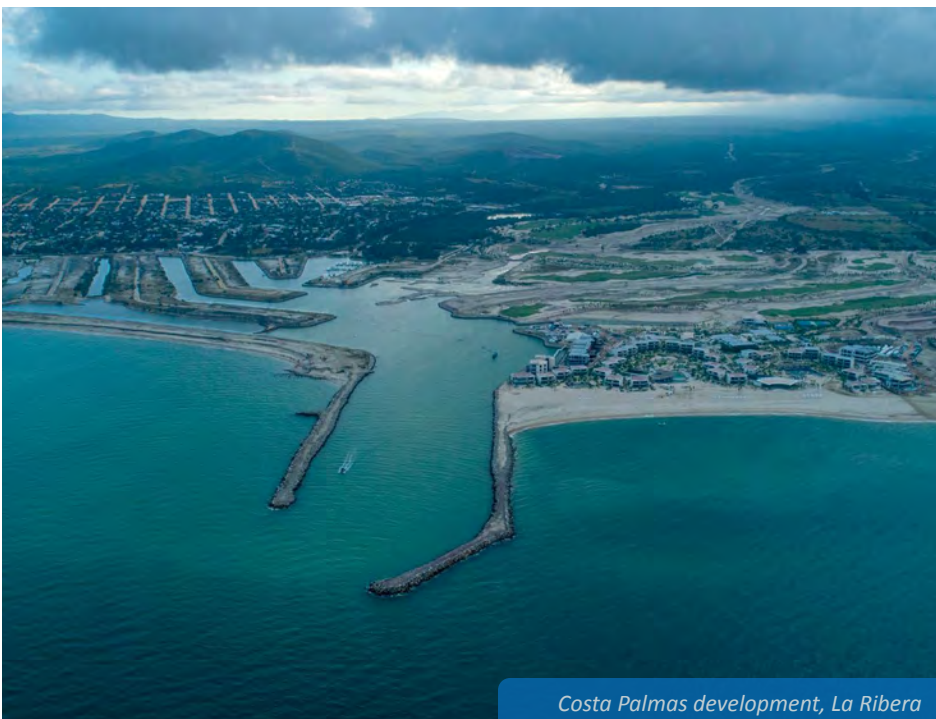
# ACT on key projects and collaborations for 2020-2022

## Engage developers and create a vision and guide for regenerative development

*Unsustainable development must be opposed. A new model must replace it that AFFIRMATIVELY galvanizes a broad base of interest and provides tangible economic, cultural and ecological benefits in the region. The actions outlined on the trip are the place to start.*

Over the past few years, there have been repeated, broad conversations and agreement around the need for a regenerative vision that citizens, leaders, communities and businesses can rally around. On the voyage, a number of parties worked this concept further. It should be a vision that addresses economic interests as the needs in the region are very real. The process should engage developers, small and large, to understand their interests and educate them about opportunities and resources (for design, building, hiring, purchasing, etc.).

The vision should reveal alternatives for moving forward in a way that benefits rather than decimates local communities and the environment. The working group prioritized work on a Principles and Objectives document that – with time, multi-party dialogue, and technical analysis – could become the new code for development in the region.



Costa Palmas development, La Ribera

“

*What I liked most about the trip:*

- » *The convergence of people from different sectors and with different perspectives who work for the same purpose and who had not had the opportunity to meet.*
- » *The opportunity to connect more between people who work locally. Identify new opportunities for collaboration.*
- » *Expanding our perspectives for the exchange with people from other regions who are working for sustainability in their communities and globally.*

— EXPEDITION PARTICIPANT



Ariadna Pico, Director of Ecology,  
Municipio de Los Cabos

# ACT on key projects and collaborations for 2020-2022

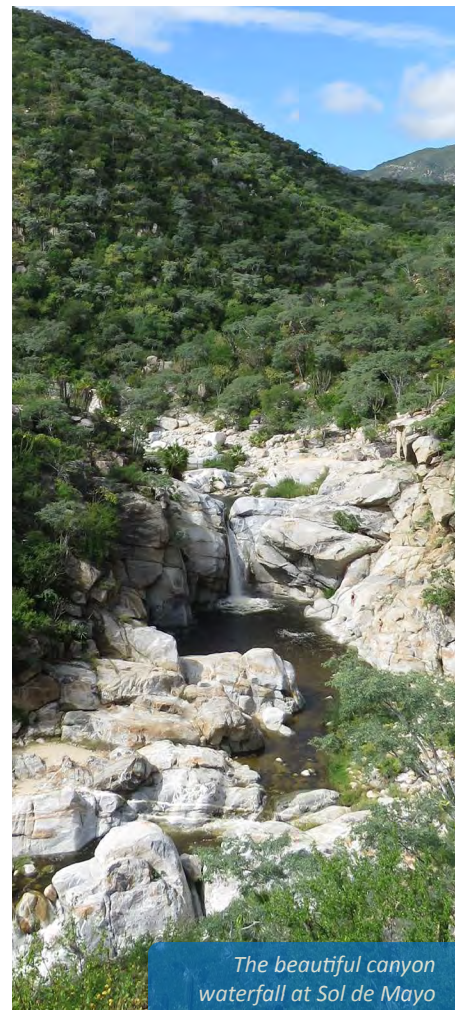
## Promote smart water management

*Water deeply affects all interests in the region; it's likely the highest leverage point for convening and working toward a sustainable vision of the region's development.*

LegacyWorks and Baja Coastal Institute (BCI) have initiated a project to gather and update information about water availability, water uses and concessions, projections of growth, and alternatives for better water management in the region. Numerous organizations and community leaders on board and involved in the trip are either directly working on these issues, or provided perspectives and options for collaboration in the future given the importance of this issue.

We propose to create a base of knowledge about the subject of water availability and water use in the Cabo del Este Region, educating and involving citizens in order to take action and demand the water security they seek. Connections will be established in every community and with a very broad set of organizations, businesses, government agencies and networks to begin a collective process.

We aim to create these connections and trust-based convening among diverse water users in order to achieve a shared vision and action plan for smart management of the region's scarcest and most precious resource.



*The beautiful canyon waterfall at Sol de Mayo*



*Martin Goebel and Rogelio Rosas introduce Santiago Delegada Elizabeth Alvarez Rosas above Santiago's Oasis*

# ACT on key projects and collaborations for 2020-2022

As LegacyWorks and our partners tackle the long-term projects described above, we will engage and provide support for three additional actions the assembled group identified as important over and over on the trip:

## ***Expand transformative experiences and education for youth***

Almost to a person, everybody aboard the *MV Sea Lion* could recall a transformational moment or learning in nature during their youth which motivates their convictions and actions today. Today's youth will be the region's stewards in 10 and 20 years; we must invest in them as part of every action we take to deepen and broaden their relationship to this magical place and inspire their future stewardship.

## ***Address transition financing***

The cost of transition from traditional economies to new, more resilient and regenerative models is generally borne by the communities closest to the resource and with the least financial flexibility. LegacyWorks' experience, for- and non-profit structures, and its networks are ideally situated to work with partners to tackle these challenges. It's a must if change is to happen.

## ***Convene continuous learning***

An emergent, alternative future for Cabo del Este is at hand. Getting there requires ALL of us to learn from the past, from each other, and from the potential in the future and then collaborate to harness the power of diversity. LegacyWorks is committed to convening small and large group experiences in the region's rural communities with Lindblad Expeditions and similar companies.



Hiking on Isla Cerralvo

## JOIN US!

*We look forward to continued work with every fellow traveler and we welcome collaboration and new partnerships with those who were not able to join us this time. Trip related materials can be viewed at [legacyworksgroup.com/expedition](https://legacyworksgroup.com/expedition).*

***The challenge ahead is daunting, but the energy to tackle it is real and the potential can be achieved. It will take a mighty sum of resources – financial, technical, intellectual, spiritual – to achieve the outcomes we envisioned. Please contact us if you have something to contribute!***

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