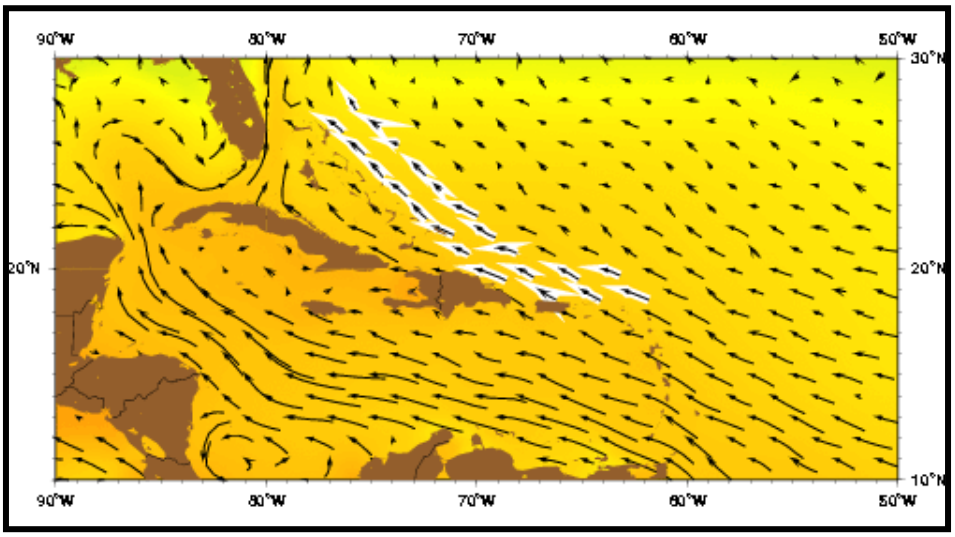
Activity Sheet No. 17

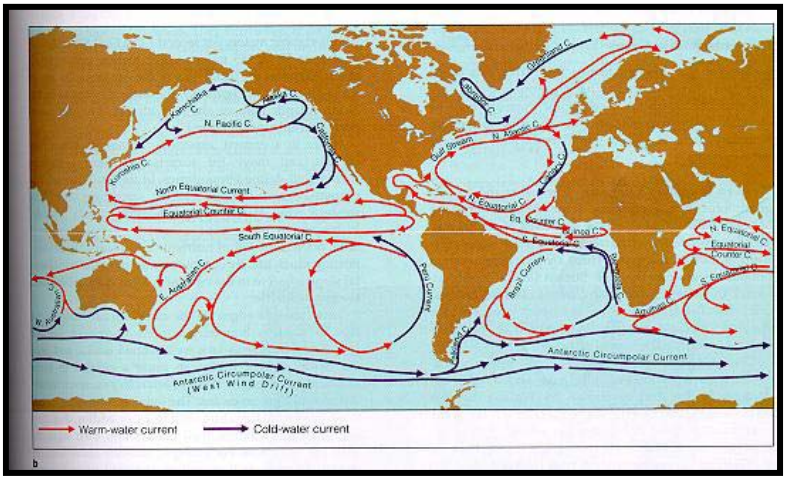
Caught in the Current

An ocean current can be defined as a horizontal movement of seawater at the ocean's surface, driven by the circulation of wind above surface waters. Large ocean currents are a response of the atmosphere and ocean to the flow of energy from the tropics to polar regions. In some cases, currents are transient features and affect only a small area. Other ocean currents are essentially permanent and extend over large horizontal distances.

The clockwise flow that extends northward into the Gulf of Mexico and joins the Yucatan Current and the Florida Current is known as the Loop Current. The Loop Current is variable in position, and at one extreme, it has an almost direct path to the Florida Current. At the other extreme, the Loop Current intrudes into the Gulf of Mexico. Occasionally this loop will reach as high as the Mississippi river delta or the Florida continental shelf.



Find your country on one of these maps. Follow the current to figure out where the queen conch larvae from that area may be dispersed.



Sources: www.earth.usc.edu; www.physicalgeography.net, www.seawifs.gsfc.nasa.gov