EPA Region 6: US-MX Border 2020 Program Newsletter

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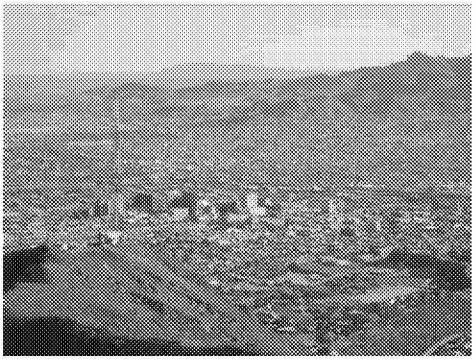
EL PASO BORDER OFFICE REGIONAL RESTRUCTURE

In October 2015, the El Paso Border Office was restructured and joined with the Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs to become the Office of Environmental Justice, Tribal and International Affairs (OEJTIA). The OEJTIA works closely with communities to facilitate culturally sensitive communication, find solutions, or reduce environmental challenges.



View of City of El Paso Texas.

The Environmental Justice (EJ) program's goal is to ensure that all people are protected from disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards by working with and on behalf of impacted communities. The U.S.-Mexico Border program honors commitments for joint U.S. and Mexico responsibility under the La Paz Agreement for protection of the environment and public health in the border region. The Tribal Affairs program serves 66 federally recognized Tribes on a government-to-government basis, consistent with their inherent sovereignty, to resolve environmental concerns. The OEJTIA also administers the General Assistance Program (GAP) that awards grants to tribes; implements the Border 2020 plan; and administers the EJ2020 plan throughout Region 6.

MANAGING AIR QUALITY ON OUR U.S. - MEXICO INTERNATIONAL BORDER: THE JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JAC) FOR AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT" HELD ITS 66TH MEETING

The Paso del Norte (PdN) region located where Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua meet, encompasses Ciudad Juárez, Chih. El Paso, TX and Doña Ana County, NM and forms a single metropolitan area separated by an international border, where thousands of people cross daily making it one of the busiest U.S. Port of Entries; while united by common cultural, historical, and economic factors. PdN residents have suffered serious air pollution problems taking a heavy toll on the region's environment.

After decades of frustration, many express optimism and have seen real progress in the fight to improve air quality due in part by efforts from the JAC. The JAC comprised of a group of concerned citizens that include government officials, environmentalists, business leaders, and non-governmental organizations, acknowledged that air pollution, regardless of its orgin, affects everyone. The JAC is committed on reducing air pollution in the PdN region and improving air quality by developing constructive policies and programs that aim to significantly improve the region's air quality.

Conventional state and federal environmental policies are hindered by political boundaries, but because pollution does not stop at the border, the JAC has pushed for a regional approach to address the air quality problem. Through successful efforts Paso del Norte residents are now able to engage government regulators and develop cooperative strategies to improve air quality throughout the international air basin.

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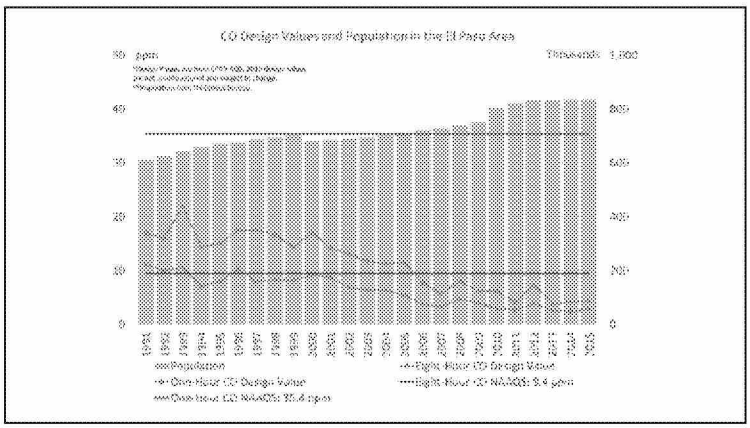
"MANAGING AIR QUALITY ON OUR U.S. - MEXICO INTERNATIONAL BORDER…JAC" Cont'd

Key Factors are responsible for the success of the Paso del Norte JAC, which for the most part, cannot be reduced to a single formula, however, there are several binational tasks that have been identified as key factors that might be useful to others interested in establishing a similar community-based organization.



Carbon Monoxide levels from 1991-2015 in El Paso Texas.

1. From its inception, members held a common understanding of the problem and shared a common objective: to improve air quality.
2. Getting the right people involved, early in the process; government, business, and civic leaders that could make things happen.
3. Focus on finding solutions rather than assessing blame; members shall adopt the philosophy that air pollution is a common problem requiring solutions.
4. Set goals and objectives early that have both short and long term objectives. Short term objectives are important so the group can have a sense of accomplishment. Long term goals and objectives also help keep the group focused because some problems cannot be solved very quickly.
5. Encourage members to stay involved, because the endeavor is an inclusive organization, allowing anyone interested in finding solutions to the air pollution problem to join.
6. During initial meetings, brainstorming sessions are held to solicit input from members of the community that resulted in members becoming stakeholders in the success of JAC's projects.
7. Good timing. As a result of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the border received increased attention from both the U.S. and Mexican governments. Environmental concerns led to a commitment to reducing pollution in the border region.
8. Patience is critical to establishing new organizations.

Over 50 Bi-national stakeholders attended the May 2016 Meeting.

On May 12, 2016 the JAC, chaired by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 's (EPA), Mark Hansen, and the Mexican Environment and Natural Resources Secretariat's (SEMARNAT), Ana Patricia Martinez, along with the other JAC members and stakeholders, celebrated the 20th anniversary of the creation of the establishment of the JAC. "This group continues to be a model for binational cooperation and border communities," said EPA Region 6 Regional Administrator Ron Curry, adding that "…area residents should be proud of local leaders for their commitment to bring healthier air to their children and families."

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Paso del Norte Water Taskforce Workshop

PDNWTF attendees

On May 20th, 2016, the Border 2020 Water Taskforce in conjuction with the Paso del Norte Water Taskforce (PDNWTF) held a joint workshop in El Paso, Texas at the University of Texas at El Paso. The workshop served as part of an effort to re-convene the PDNWTF which originally formed in 1998 in an effort to bring stakeholders together to work cooperatively on a regional approach for future planning and discussion of water sources in the region, and to help assure water quality and availability within the Paso del Norte Region.

Much like the Border 2020 Water Taskforce, which was created to identify water issues of the highest priority in the region, the workshop was held to bring key bi-national stakeholders to discuss cooperative alternatives for managing the water in the region. The region's water currently faces a number of threats, one of which includes the possibility for greater demand and less availability of water due to diverse factors.

Prior to the workshop, members of the PDNWTF in conjuction with Texas A&M Kingsville conducted a survey of stakeholders in the region which included irrigation districts, water utilities, water governance institutions, water planning agencies as well as other water stakeholders to gather feedback on current methods of water management practices. The purpose of the survey was to document how stakeholders: 1) currently address changing hydrologic conditions; 2) plan to operate under a scenario of future water shortage; and 3) envision a sustainable water future for the PdN segment of the Rio Grande/Bravo.

About 50 bi-national stakeholders attended the workshop in El Paso, Texas. Both commissioners for the US and Mexican Sections of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC/CILA) gave opening remarks. UTEP President, Dr. Diana Natalacio, spoke during the lunch session. Brief expert report presentations were given on: 1) 2030 Projected water supply and demand in the PdN segment of the Rio Grande/Bravo for Mexico, Texas and New Mexico; 2) 2030 Projected population growth in the PdN; 3) How climate change and variation are reducing surface water supply; 4) How reservoir sedimentation reduces Elephant Butte storage volume; 5) Results of the stakeholder survey on water management practices and 6) Next steps for the PDNWTF.

During the final session of the workshop, attendees voted on the next steps to which the PDNWTF priorities should focus on engaging stakeholders. Approximately 14% of the atteendees agreed that focusing on technology was the top priority, followed by Governance (i.e. cross-border both state and internationally) at 13% and then conservation efforts, primarly from irrigation district efforts but not excluding municipal, on-farm practices and river management. The table below lists all of the next step as voted on by attendees.

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Paso del Norte Water Taskforce Workshop cont'd

STRATEGY	VOTES	%
Reuse	11	5.2%
Economic Incentives	18	8.6%
Education	22	10.5%
Environment	16	7.6%
Legal/Regulatory	15	7.1%
Engagement	24	11.4%
Governance	28	13.3%
Green Infrastructure	20	9.5%
Technologies	29	13.8%
Conservation	27	12.9%

Results on Priorities for PDNWTF

DISPOSAL OF SCRAP TIRES UNDER STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTROL: *A SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLE OF BINATIONAL COOPERATION. – Rethinking scrap tires as a resource and not a waste, through a binational cross border business driven approach.*

Cuidad Juárez was home to the largest scrap tire pile on the U.S.-Mexico border, estimated to have had more than six million tires in 2004, creating a permanent risk of fire, insect and rodent borne diseases and death. Currently this site, emblematic of the scrap tire problem on th border, is virtually clean as a result of a coordinated effort by the Cuidad Juárez and other stakeholders.

A successful example of a binational cooperation is the Paso del Norte Tire Advisory Committee (TAC), spearheaded in 2014 by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), EPA Region 6 in Dallas, and the State of Texas Alliance for Recycling (STAR), with support from the Rubber Manufacturers Association (RMA).

Ciudad Juárez Tire Pile prior to Border 2020 Program

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Scrap Tires Cont'd

As an important deliverable under the Border 2020 program and utilizing the Public-Private Partneship (PPP) approach, the TAC assembled binational workgroups to rethink scrap tires as a resource -- not a waste. The TAC developed actions to effectively manage scrap tires as a binational resource in the Paso del Norte region that can serve as a model for other regions. This creative approach created a forum and gave voice to a diverse group of participants and experts from the scrap tire community, including elected officials, NGOs, the tire industry, processing and recycling companies, and government officials from local, state, and federal offices. Active participants include the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the TCEQ, Mexico's Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), the North American Development Bank (NADB), Grupo Cementos de Chihuahua (GCC), and other Public-Private Partnership (PPP) members, such as nongovernment organizations theUnion Ecologica de Juárez, A.C. and the State of Texas Alliance for Recycling (STAR), as well as the Rubber Manufacturers Association (RMA), a private industry association.

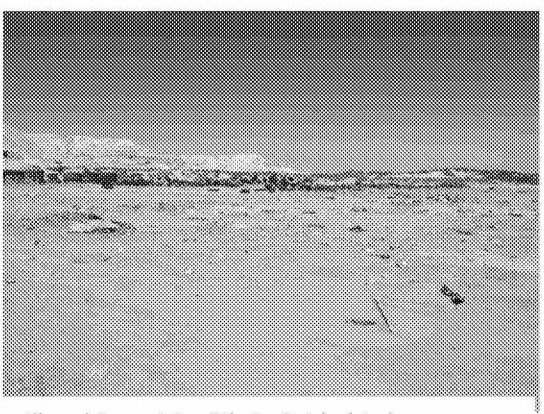
Scrap tires, mostly converted into piles of shredded tires, best describe final disposal in border communities. Local governments in Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua, being the public entities nearest to citizens, are ideal parties to secure a real and true final disposal of scrap tires, including disposal that may occur outside their jurisdictions, across international and state borders, under appropriate environmental international rules and regulations. The un-checked flow of scrap tires across multiple jurisdictions underlines the importance of the TAC. The issue of scrap tire collection, storage, shredding and final disposal is one that requires financial collaboration of all involved stakeholders: the consumers, the generators, the transporters, the solid waste - environmental departments of local governments, state regulatory agencies, and private sector recyclers/shredders.

The TAC continues carrying out activities and outcomes with a PPP approach by moving forward on four strategic goals:

1. Fair and effective enforcement
2. Develop end markets
3. Secure funding
4. Legislative

The leadership team recruited stakeholders which formed into workgroups to address each of the four strategies. Each workgroup created an action plan to guide them in the short and long term, all the time developing a business plan that may serve as a template for a public-private partnership in managing used tires, keeping at all time a business theme: "Rethink scrap tires as a resource -- not a waste.

Carlos Rincon is working closely with Ciudad Juárez's entrepreneurial stakeholders, known as Union Ecológica de Juárez, A.C., a group that for the last two years has carried out a domestic business plan for shredding tire piles in northern states of Mexico, especially Chihuahua. Ciudad Juárez's business partners have accumulated infrastructure and a contract with a Mexican consortium of cement plants capable of processing and reclaiming more than 5,000 shredded used tires per day and are looking into the New Mexico and Texas used tire piles and new tire shops to legally transport discarded used tires for disposal in cement factories in northern Mexico.



Illegal Scrap Tire Pile in Cuidad Juárez

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Scrap Tires Cont'd

Members of the TAC and stakeholders for each of the four strategic goals meet quarterly in moving forward with tasks and actions that each strategic goal has established. The next meeting is in Las Cruces on August 18.

Making a Visible Difference (MVD): Anthony, New Mexico

February 23-24, 2016 Attendees Workshop

EPA developed the Making a Difference (MVD) Initiative to "work each and every day - hand-in-hand with other federal agencies, states, tribes and local communities - to improve the health of American families and protect the environment one community at a time, all across the country to better support the efforts of communities, especially those that are environmentally overburdened, underserved, and economically distressed. " The City of Anthony, formed in 2010, is in the early stages of community development planning. The city does not own any of its utilities, and lacks adequate zoning and subdivision regulations as well as recreational facilities. The city hopes to have green components installed to detain flows and remove sediment to deal with flooding issues. EPA will work with the community to assist with the development of sustainable municipal services and infrastructure by fostering partnerships and leveraging resources from other federal, state and local agencies.

The City of Anthony received Technical Assistance under the Office of Sustainable Development (OSD) Program's Building block tool which consisted of the Sustainable Strategies for Small Cities and Rural Areas Technical Assistance workshop. Three conference calls between the City of Anthony, OSD, and the El Paso Border office staff members were conducted to finalize the plans for the technical assistance workshop in addition to a self-assessment completed by Anthony staff. On February 23-24, 2016 the Sustainable Strategies for Small Cities and Rural Areas workshop was brought to Anthony. The Mayor and staff gave a tour of Anthony, highlighting their vision for Anthony which was followed by a community meeting.

View of Main street in Anthony, New Mexico

The second day consisted of the actual workshop focused on identifying and revitalizing the down's main street, strengthening the local economy, providing housing options and efficient infrastructure. The final product was a Next Steps Memorandum for the Sustainable Strategies for Small Cities and Rural Areas will serve as an action plan for the City of Anthony to use as a guide for moving forward in their city growth. Attendees included representatives from Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Senator Udall's office, Senator Heinrich's office, NGO's, and EPA R6 staff members Arturo Blanco, Carlos Rincon, Maria Sisneros and Debra Tellez.

Elections for the City of Anthony were held shortly after the workshop. Debra Tellez met with the newly elected Anthony

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Making a Visible Difference (MVD): Anthony, New Mexico Cont'd

Mayor March 31st to brief her on the Making a Difference Initiative, Building Blocks workshop and to get her vision for the City of Anthony as other initiatives are pursued.

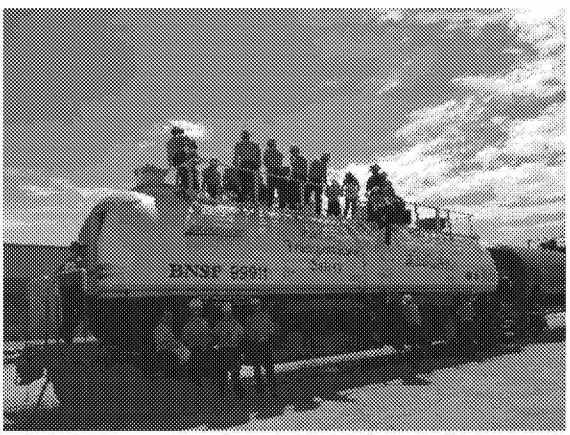
A coordinated effort between Rio Grande Council of Governments along with EPA R6 staff members (Debra Tellez, Nelly Smith, Susanna Perea, and Tom Ruiz) and the Mayor of Anthony assisted the City of Anthony into submitting a letter of interest for the next phase of the Office of Sustainable Communities Smart Growth Program. SGIA offers technical assistance to communities wanting to incorporate smart growth in their development. The City of Anthony was seeking assistance in creating an Economic Development Growth council and assistance with architectural and infrastructure design of its main street and implement the actions from the Feb 2016 Building Blocks Anthony Workshop. In order to identify lessons learned and best practices that will guide the agencies work in communities going forward, OSD created a more consistent reporting framework to help convey the story of Making a Visible Difference efforts and better measure the effectiveness of the MVD approach. Debra Tellez captured all project, partner, and status information on the Anthony MVD program to input into the database.

Emergency Response: Hazardous Rail Car Leak Mitigation El Paso/Juárez/Doña Ana County Project

The City of El Paso received a Border 2020 Grant of $30,000 in 2015, to increase preparedness and response involving hazardous railcar leak incidences in the Paso del Norte region. Hazardous rail cargo crosses the international boundary via the "Black Bridge" between El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico. Many of the railcars are staged in downtown El Paso, with the potential of exposing thousands of people in both El Paso and Ciudad Juárez to an incident that would have an immediate and dire effect on the populace and environment when exposed to a hazardous substance. In addition, a newly constructed inter-modal facility in Doña Ana County, New Mexico adjacent to the Santa Teresa Port of Entry has increased the amount of rail traffic in the region and thus increasing the potential for hazardous railcar incidents.

July 2015 Training Event First Responders

The project funded helped to increase preparedness for possible hazardous railcar incidences, increase mitigation capabilities and helped to re-establish and continue communications between first responders between the communities of El Paso, Ciudad Juárez and Doña Ana County. The project entailed the purchase of the three Midland Kits, equipment used to stop and contain leaks that may occur if a railcar incident were to occur involving hazardous substances. Each of the jurisdictions received one of these kits. The kits are the most state of the art pieces of equipment that first responders can use for such incidences. None of the three jurisdictions had this piece of equipment prior to the grant. The equipment was necessary as the rail industry



July 2015 Responders from Cuidad Juárez, Doña Ana and El Paso

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Emergency Response: El Paso Cont'd

has changed to what is termed "next generation" railcars for the transportation of a diverse array of hazardous materials. These new railcars use different valves and fittings to load and unload the material being transported, thereby, making much of the traditional mitigation equipment the region possessed now obsolete.

In July 2015, more than 120 first responders from El Paso, Ciudad Juárez and Doña Ana County Fire Department, over a three day period, received the proper training needed to operate and learn how to use the Midland Kits. Trainers from BNSF who invented the Midland Kit trained the responders, utilizing a mock railcar that was transported from their training rail yard. The training consisted of lecture, PowerPoint and dialogue between the training participants and instructors. The final portion of the training involved utilizing a Midland Kit on a training rail car, to properly learn how to handle this piece of equipment. The training event was covered by the local media, generating six new stories on the local television in both El Paso and Juárez, as well as, two newspaper articles, one in the El Paso Times and another in the El Diario de Juárez.

April 2016 Refresher Training

In April 2016, once the Midland kits had been purchased by El Paso Fire Department, a half-day refresher training was held with representatives from each of the jurisdictions. In addition, that day each of the jurisdictions received their own Midland Kit to take back to their respective cities. With the funding of this project, the first responders within the region are now better equipped and prepared to deal with hazardous materials spills involving railcars. In addition, there is an increase in awareness and knowledge among the first responders of the threats that involve railcars in the region. With each jurisdiction within the Paso del Norte having its own state-of-the art Midland kit, each jurisdiction they can better respond to such incidents. Last, communication among the jurisdictions was re-established and strengthened with the training event that occurred.

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Emergency Response: El Paso Cont'd

Equipment Exchange to Ciudad Juárez and Dona Ana County First Responders.

Emergency Response: Bi-National Tabletop and Functional Exercises between the cities of Harlingen, Texas and Matamoros, Tamaulipas

The City of Harlingen received a $60,000 Border 2020 Grant of for cross-training and exercises with the City of Matamoros. The objectives of the project included: training for the tactical incident management of on-scene operations at a Hazardous Materials Incident; preparation of the First responders to manage during the first hour of a Hazardous Materials Incident; learn how to identify hazardous Materials transporting containers; learn control techniques for leaks and spills and; train to use the Incident Command System (ICS) and remote communication technology. Part of the training included review the sister-city contingency plan in place and utilizing it while conducting a table top and functional exercise.

May 2016 Training Event First Responders between Harlingen and Matamoros.

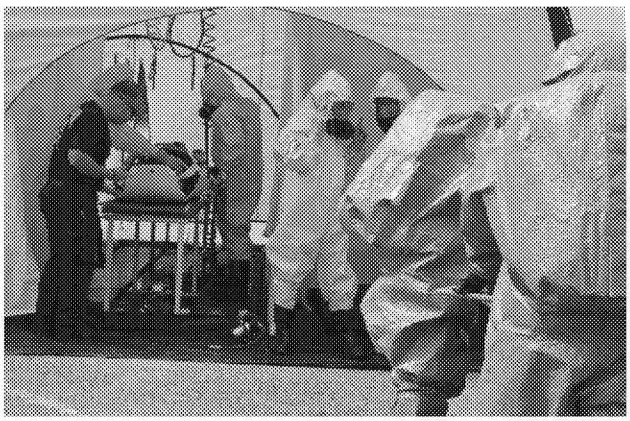
Emergency Response: Harlingen-Matamoros Cont'd

The training and two exercises conducted took place from May 16 through May 20, 2016. The training included:
Rescue and Recovery: Introduction response information exposure and contamination and decontamination procedures;

- Personal Protective Equipment: Chemical science personal protective equipment
- Product Control: Container types product control measures.

The table top and functional exercises looked at a response that involved a release of a ton from a chlorine cylinder as well as a release of chlorine from a rail car. The project funded resulted in the enchancement of a bi-national response by including the latest technology advancements for communications; enchanced the response capabilities of responding to a potential chemical exposure/accident that could affect both sides of the border; and updated the sister city plan contacts. The final day which included the functional exercise was covered by local media. The story can be found at: http://www.rgvproud.com/news/local-news/fire-departments-team-up-for-hazmat-training

Medical monitoring of responders during May 2015 exercise


Practice medical evaluation of hurt personnel during exercise

New Mexico/Chihuahua Rural Task Task Force Public Meeting

On May 17, 2016, the New Mexico-Chihuahua Rural Task Force held a public meeting at the Columbus Library, Columbus, NM. Mayor Phillip Skinner provided welcome remarks, followed by Ing. Martin Palomares, Desarrollo Urbano y Ecología Ascensión, Chih., who has served as the Rural Task Force Leader from Mexico for the past four years, two of which have been without a U.S. counterpart. NMED District Supervisor Mike Kensler a longtime supporter of the Task Force having attended and presented at last year's public meeting, also provided opening remarks.

Public meeting in Columbus, New Mexico (May 17, 2016)

Carlos Rincon led the meeting with the mission of the U.S.-MX Border 2020 Program. Twenty five participants

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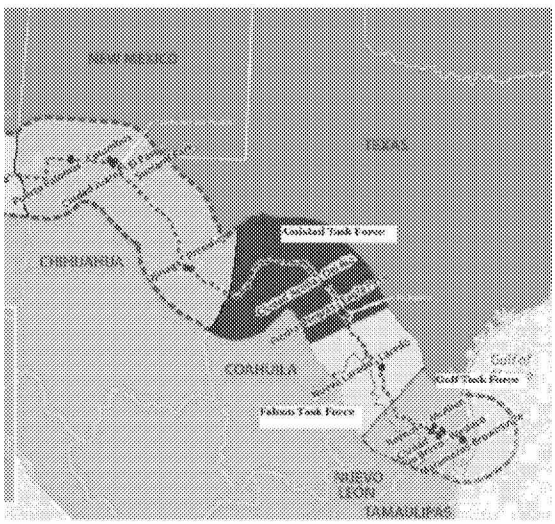
New Mexico/Chihuahua Rural Task Task Force Public Meeting cont'd

attended the meeting which focused on Holistic Range Management, Climate Smart Agriculture (UACH), as well as issues related to the need for Water Conservation in Ascensión and the need for Solid Waste Management program in Palomas. Professor Gerardo Bezanilla of the Autonomous University of Chihuahua presented preliminary results of his Border 2020 project on slowing or reversing the effects of desertification caused by overgrazing. Peter Edmunds, Border Partners discussed water conservation efforts, in-house and community gardens and gray-water being used for irrigation. Dr DuBois discussed the effects of dust storms on health and safety He also is working with the National Weather Service to inform the public about dust events via social media. Dr. David Johnson, a researcher at the New Mexico State University (NMSU) Institute for Energy and the Environment, presented the results of his recent experiments with soil amendments made using composted cow manure. He showed an increase in crop production by shifting from a bacterial-dominant to a fungal- dominant product while building the soil and without using fertilizers. These results may ultimately cause a shift away from the use of chemical fertilizers, which can cause air and water quality problems. Attendees included, SEMARNAT, NMSU and UACH academia, NGO's, and local residents.

Four-State Regional Workgroup Activities

The Four-State Regional Workgroup is the most complex of the four regional workgroups within the Border 2020 Program, due to its geographical expanse and the number of municipalities it contains. The region includes parts of three Mexican States and a total of at least 29 municipalities on Northern Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas, and 168 cities and towns on the U.S. side of the border.

The Four-State RWG is divided into three geographically based Task Forces (TFs) — a) Amistad, b) Falcon, and c) Gulf, each of which has established subject-specific committees related to its priority concerns and the goals of the Border 2020 program. The subcommittees in each task force are: Waste, Water, Environmental Education and Health, and Emergency Preparedness. (NOTE: It should be noted that these task forces do not have an Air subcommittee and the Amistad TF does not have a Water subcommittee.)



4-State RWG Geographic Map

In 2015 through early 2016, each of the region's TFs had three public meetings focusing on highlighting actions that were covered at the Waste Policy Forum that took place in Tijuana, B.C. early in 2015. At each of the TF meetings, the program also addressed discussion on the two-year action plan priorities, highlighting the various Border 2020 projects that had been funded in 2013-2014 and presenting to stakeholders the Border 2020 projects that were funded in 2015.

Brief narrative of the 2016 meeting at each of the three TFs:.-

Amistad Task Force. – Granting that the March 10, 2015 meeting took place in Ciudad Acuña we continued rotating the meeting locations. The December 8, 2015 meeting took place in Del Rio, TX, while the March 9, 2016 meeting was held in Eagle Pass, with attendance of about50 people, including local environment and ecological departments, as well as public works and Civil Protection managers, representing Piedras Negras, Ciudad Acuña and Nava, Coahuila, Eagle Pass and Del Rio, TX,Kickapoo

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Four-State RWG Activities Cont'd

Traditional Tribe, state officials from TCEQ and Coahuila Environment Secretariat, BECC, educational institutions, USEPA and SEMARNAT.

The Amistad TF level of collaboration and engagement from B2020 partners underscores the importance of projects implemented on a binational scope that address environmental priorities with strategies that include the assurance of water availability with high drinking standards, reducing waste, and ways to share experiences and best practices that addresses effects of environmental threats.

A B2020 success story is the Arroyo las Vacas project that includes stream clean up, ecosystem restoration, wildlife conservation and education components, creating a geographical database, identifying areas of concern and of environmental wealth that resident can access, making it a tool for discussion useful to make decisions on improving conditions of the Arroyo las Vacas. The Secretariet of Coahuila led this project together with Ciudad Acuña, the TCEQ, the University of Texas at Austin, and the Technological Institue of Ciudad Acuña.

The Southwest Border Area Health Education Center conducted a Promotora environmental education training on pesticide awareness and asthma triggers, an example which builds up partnership between the UT School of Public Health, Texas Department of State Health and Human Services, Mexican Consulate and Eagle Pass Independent School District. In this project, students, teachers and parents received training and six Promotoras were certified to train residents on risks to minimize exposures to harmful chemicals. At 30 homes, certified promotoras did a pre-assessment of chemicals used at households, and a post assessment to identify changes in behavior patterns.

A project on materials and waste management conducted by Eagle Pass established a Plastic Bag Ordinance that would: 1) Protect the environment by reducing use of plastic bags, 2) Protect life and property from flooding resulting from storm drainage obstructed by plastic bags, 3) Protect fish, animals and rivers from the adverse effects of plastic bags, and 4) Promote the beautification of the City of Eagle Pass. As of April 1, 2016, businesses must provide signage of the phase out period including information about benefits of reducing, reusing and recycling. A five-member environmental advisory committee was formed to monitor the effects of the ordinance and report back to city council.

The Falcon Task Force.- WASTE Committee met on March 8, 2016, hosted by City of Laredo Environmental Services, with25 people attending, including managers from local environment and solid waste departments, as well as Representatives of the Laredo City Council and the Mayors of Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, who joined Stategovernment official representatives of TCEQ and the Nuevo Leon Secretariat f oEnvironment and Sustainable Development., BECC, Mexico's Consulate General, local educational institutions, USEPA and SEMARNAT.

Meeting Participants in Falcon Task Force on March 8, 2016.

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Four-State RWG Activities Cont'd

The Falcon TF Waste Committee meeting included a site visit to Laredo's recycling center, encouraging stakeholders to share about updates related to waste projects within the two year action plan. At the

meeting the recently appointed Mexican Co-Leader for the Falcon Emergency Response Committee was introduced to the group. The City of Nuevo Laredo Ecology Director provided an overview of the City's household hazardous waste (HHW) program including the City's HHW facility. The Nuevo Laredo administration is working with its waste service provider to upgrade their collection services, which will complement the city's HHW collection program and promote environmental stewardship in the community. The program started in 2005 and consists of residents bringing spent used oil, paint waste, pharmaceutical and detergents among other HHWs.

The Waste Committee Co-facilitators proposed developing a list of certified waste transporters that collect Electronic-Waste (e-Waste lor used electronics), and such directory could be shared at BECC's e-waste Forum that is

scheduled to take place in the Baja California/California border region. The City of Laredo has been promoting environmental stewardship in the community investing in renewable energy by phasing out incandescent light bulbs and replacing with 7000 LED lamps. Laredo Environmental Services in conjunction with the City's Health Department have been cleaning up streams to prevent vector sources and illness related to Dengue and Zika viruses.

As a resourceful partner the Technological University of Nuevo Laredo is working with Roadrunner Mulch on a project to reuse scrap tire material. Augusto Garcia Mier y Teran of Roadrunner Mulch discussed scrap tire disposal and possible solutions. Roadrunner Mulch collects, grinds, processes, sorts, and distributes rubber mulch, buffing and crumb rubber. The company has processed over 200 metric tons per month and recycled more than 2 million pounds of rubber. It has offices in Mexico City and a retreading plant in Monterrey, Nuevo León. Because a tire recycling business requires large volumes of scrap tires to be profitable, the amount of scrap tires generated in Laredo and Nuevo Laredo makes it difficult to justify a multi-million tire recycling complex from a financial perspective.

Gulf Task Force – Waste Subcommittee Meeting, met on Friday, March 11, 2015 in Pharr, Texas. The meeting was attended by approximately 30 bi-national stakeholders from both the U.S and Mexico. Attendees included representatives from EPA, TCEQ, Tamaulipas Secretariet of Environment and Sustainable Development (SEDUMA), City of Reynosa, City of Pharr, BECC, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and others.

The meeting included presentations from SEDUMA who had two Border 2020 Projects funded in 2015. Both projects awarded to SEDUMA were related to scrap tire management and solid waste recycling programs. The projects focused on assisting the municipalities of Rio Bravo and Valle Hermoso, Tamaulipas develop a strategic management plan for their municipal solid waste. The goals of the project include: reorientating their traditional solid waste management including collection and disposal to integrated waste management; promote environmental education and training to help reduce waste generation and encourage best management practices on segregation, reuse and recycle; strengthen municipal environmental legislation on solid waste; strengthen administrative and operation areas response for waste management; and implement an inventory of urban solid waste generators.

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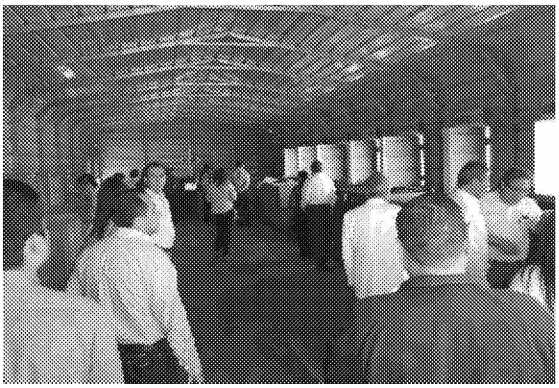
The City of Pharr, a previous recipient of Border 2020 funds, presented their recycling program "Let's Clean it and Green it Up" as well as gave stakeholders a tour of their recycling facility. The City of Pharr received a Border 2020 grant to offer more frequent and convenient solid waste dispoal events, as well as host more beautification and cleanup events and improve their recycling and outreach programs.


Gulf TF particpants tour Pharr Recycling Center

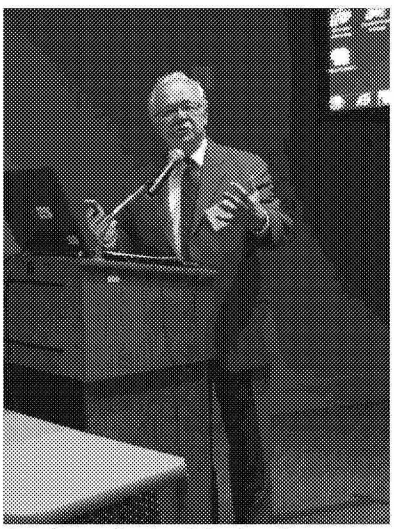
Stakeholders also heard a presentation by an NGO "Recycled Dreams" which teaches women in the community the skills needed to make recycled bags and purses from various recyclable materials which can then be turned and sold for a profit. The organization focuses not only on giving women a way to pursue some economic opportunity to improve their economic situation, but also promoting and creating awareness of recycling and keeping communities clean.

EPA Region 6: US-MX Border 2020 Program Newsletter

Children's Health Symposium: El Paso, Texas

The Children's Environmental Health program is central to EPA's mission. In the past three years, the EPA's U.S.-Mexico Border 2020 program in regions 6 and 9 have provided more than $500,000 to a dozen organizations to specifically address children's health. Funding has supported capacity-building through training for childcare and school personnel, for environmental home assessments, to educate

farm workers about take-home pesticide exposures, and to train those who train others. These efforts have directly impacted about 25,000 people, who, in turn, impacted 35,000, or even 50,000 people in the border region.


Ron Curry, Region 6 Regional Administrator

In 2015, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's began to work with several partners to address binational environmental challenges and disproportionate health impacts that burden border communities, especially as they impact children. Both Region 6 and Region 9's Office of Children's Health, in coordination with EPA's headquarters Office of Children's Health Protection decided to address and bring greater awareness to children's health protection along the border through a variety of initiatives. One of these initiatives included promoting two children's health symposiums focused specifically on children's health protection. Children's health along the border is often affected by the mismanagement of pesticides, poor indoor and outdoor air quality, misuse of chemicals and other waste, poor water quality, and binational chemical emergencies. It is important that healthcare professionals, public health practitioners, community health promoters or *promotoras*, and others in the community that work or care for children understand the crucial links between the environment and health in order to take steps towards improving children's health outcomes in communities along the Border.

The first children's health symposium: *Children's Environmental Health on the Border: Protecting Children Where They Live, Learn, and Play* was held at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in El Paso, Texas, September 24-25, 2015. EPA Region 6 partnered with Texas Tech-Southwest Center for Pediatric Environmental Health at Texas Tech, US/Mexico Border Health Commission, the US/Mexico Border 2020 Program, and Children's Environmental Health Programs, and the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) for the binational symposium. Texas Tech is now home to

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the Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit, a network of physicians jointly funded by EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. The Unit sponsored the symposium and Texas Tech provided continuing education credits to attendees.

The two main goals of the symposium were: 1) to increase knowledge of how early childhood exposure can affect children's health; and 2) to facilitate networking among the healthcare community, promotoras, and the public. More than 150 doctors, nurses, promotoras and public health professionals from Texas, New Mexico and Chihuahua attended the 2-day symposium.

Thirty experts presented on asthma, lead and mercury exposure, climate change impacts on children's health and a dozen other topics. Simultaneous English-Spanish translation was provided for all the presentations. Discussion topics included: climate change impacts on children's health, and prenatal exposures; childhood breathing--healthy lungs and good indoor air quality; e-cigarettes; unconventional petroleum exploration concerns; carbon monoxide; asthma, and lead. Final symposium agenda, presentations, and speaker bios are available for download at the symposium website.

Children's Health Symposium Cont'd

Children's Health Symposium Attendees

3-State and 4-State Partner Calls

MONTHLY BORDER PARTNERS CONFERENCE CALL: The El Paso Border Team began in 2006 having monthly calls with Border 2020 Federal and State Co-Chair Border staff in order to keep each of the agencies updated on ongoing border meetings and efforts as they relate to the Border Program. The meetings are held every 2nd Tuesday of month with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT in Spanish), New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), the Secretariat of Urban Development and Ecology for state of Chihuahua (SDUE in Spanish) and Ysleta del Sur Pueblo (YDSP). The conference calls focus on environmental border events in the Texas-New Mexico-Chihuahua (TX-NM-CHIH) region that each agency conducts. As events occur, updates are discussed to better prepare for the event and receive

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3-State and 4-State Partner Calls Cont'd

input by the border partners. In the past months, updates that have been discussed include the Border 2020 2-year workplans for the TX-NM-CHIH Regional Workgroup that focused on projects and actions that were completed or will be completed in 2015 through 2016. In addition, border projects funded and their status are shared amongst the group, as well as, any activities that took place as part of these projects. Other discussions included taskforce meetings: the Joint Advisory committee (January and May 2016); New Mexico-Chihuahua taskforce (May 2016); Water Taskforce jointly with Paso del Norte Water taskforce Workshop (May 2016). Ongoing discussion regarding the PROAIRE, air quality management plan for Cuidad Juárez, has been included in each monthly call. Partner meetings that have taken place has included the Bi-national Health Council meetings in El Paso, Texas and Presidio, Texas. In addition, TCEQ hosted their annual Trade Fair in May 2016.

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Border 2020 Projects Funded

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is awarding more than $521,000 to 14 organizations in Texas, New Mexico and Mexico. The funds will support projects such as conservation, waste collection, water quality protection, recycling expansion, green infrastructure and improving environmental education in the region.

The following organizations received grants:

- **Federación Mexicana de Asociaciones Privadas de Salud y Desarrollo Comunitario, A.C.** – Received $50,000 for sustainable and resilience housing
- **Subsecretaria de Medio Ambiente, Tamaulipas** – Received $20,866 to strengthen solid waste programs
- **Secretaría de Medio Ambiente del Estado de Coahuila de Zaragoza** – Received $16,777 for electronic waste recycling
- **City of Harlingen Fire Department** – Received $60,000 to support binational tabletop exercises
- **Instituto Tecnológico de Ciudad Juárez** – Received $43,204 for a green infrastructure and sustainability project
- **Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua – Facultad de Zootecnia y Ecología** – Received $41,388 for a soil conservation and management project
- **Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Medio Ambiente, Tamaluipas** – Received $9,385 for energy efficient lighting
- **Texas A&M University-Kingsville** – Received $38,885 for storm water improvements
- **Grupo Ecológico Green Tec-Osos del Instituto Tecnológico de Piedras Negras** – Received $36,054 for electronic waste recycling
- **The University of Texas at Austin** – Received $58,575 for a water quality improvement initiative
- **Brownsville Public Utilities Board** – Received $25,000 for an educational campaign to help eliminate water discharges
- **Junta de Aguas y Drenaje de Matamoros** - Received $25,000 for an educational campaign to help eliminate water discharges
- **City of Pharr, Recycling Center**- Received $36,390 for a green campaign
- **Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, Facultad de Comercio, Administración y Ciencias Sociales de Nuevo Laredo** – Received $11,000 for Environmental Education and Legislative action reforms

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