BORDER 2012: U.S.- MEXICO ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM

REGIONAL WORKGROUP NEWSLETTER

ARIZONA - SONORA Summer 2004

Arizona/Sonora Task Force Capacity Building Workshop

By Lorena López-Powers

The Arizona/Sonora Regional Workgroup's Border 2012 Task Force Workshop was held to give task force leaders and key community representatives, additional information on the Border 2012 Program and ensure that task force leaders are fully aware of: their roles and responsibilities, funding opportunities, and expectations on Program results, reporting, and accountability.

Participants also had the opportunity to listen and interact in an "Outreach and Stakeholder Involvement" panel, which included representatives from industry, non-governmental organizations, and a U.S. tribal coordinator. Through the implementation of Border 2012, task forces are encouraged to fully engage with the public as they develop and carry out their work plans and priorities. Panelists made recommendations on how to enhance the participation of community stakeholders in the task forces, as this has been a challenge in previous border programs.

The demand for communication and information sharing increases as Border 2012 progresses. This challenge is being addressed through the creation of an electronic bulletin board where information on Border 2012 is posted. The bulletin board is available at www.border2012.net. We anticipate that the bulletin board will complement the official Border 2012 web site managed by EPA (www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder).

Finally, the workshop included an open forum to raise issues and concerns on program and/or project-specific activities. The Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup hopes to continue a dialogue among the members of the task forces to address the challenges they face as the Border 2012 Program continues. ■

Rural Road in Douglas, Arizona/Agua Prieta, Sonora area

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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
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We in the Regional Workgroup Newsletter Committee, have a continuing commitment to inform the public on Border 2012. This Arizona/Sonora Regional Workgroup publication (Summer 2004) provides community stakeholders with information on environmental work that is being done in the region. It also contains specific contact information on the five task forces that were created under the workgroup. In this edition, we are introducing two new features that profile co-chairs of the workgroup as well as community members active in working on environmental issues in the Arizona-Sonora border region. We hope to continue to serve our communities on both sides of the border with information that is important to them. If you have any specific questions, please feel free to contact us at 1-800-334-0741 (San Diego Border Office) or 1-888-271-9302 (ADEQ Tucson Office). ■

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Notes from Regional Workgroup Meeting in Rio Rico, AZ

By Edna Mendoza

The Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup sponsored a public meeting in Rio Rico, Arizona on February 11, 2004. This second meeting of the Regional Workgroup was chaired by Mr. Ed Ranger of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), Ms. Laura Yoshii of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Lic. Eduardo Charles Pesqueira of the Secretariat of Urban Infrastructure and Ecology of Sonora (SIUE). Opening remarks were made by each of the co-chairs followed by presentations on the Border 2012 competitive grants program, tribal issues, communication tools, and updates from each of the Arizona-Sonora task forces. Approximately 100 people attended.

The meeting began with Ms. Yoshii providing a summary of the National Coordinators' Meeting held in early December in Matamoros, Tamaulipas. The national leaders of EPA and SEMARNAT were very receptive to input from the regional work groups, urging them to continue to provide concrete comments. During the meeting, briefings were given for:

• **Water –** Participants agreed that one of the highest priorities is infrastructure. To date 51 projects have been certified and funded by the BECC and NADBANK, benefiting 6.4 million people. There is a commitment to continue to identify the highest priorities.

• **Air –** Completion of a borderwide baseline study is important for establishing projects and activities to achieve the goals of Border 2012. Good progress has been made in obtaining air monitoring data, which is essential to identify the most effective projects and activities. Use of low sulfur fuels and diesel retrofits were the top national priorities identified.

• **Land Management –** There is a need to develop waste management infrastructure. This will be a focus at both the national and regional levels. Tire piles were identified as a priority for improved management, including reuse and recycling options. Another priority is tracking hazardous waste and the need for binational policies for cleanup projects.

• **Environmental Health –** The participants agreed to include health issues in all areas of the Border 2012 program.

• **Chemical Emergency Response –** Tremendous progress has been made in ensuring good communication, and the ability to respond jointly. There is a commitment to continue developing sister city agreements, 12 of which have been completed. There is a need to incorporate homeland security issues more fully. Mexico's need for more equipment is being addressed. There is a program underway to make surplus equipment available to Mexico. (See related article on page 9.)

• **Enforcement and Compliance –** The group agreed to conduct a survey for baseline data of compliance, in order to identify projects aimed at improving compliance with environmental regulations.

EPA's Gary Wolinsky briefed the audience on the status of the Border 2012 competitive grants program. A request for proposals (RFP) was announced in September 2003 for this initial round of funding and closed on December 31st. The proposals are now under review by the Regional Workgroup co-chairs. Final selection of projects is planned for early summer 2004. Almost $4.7 million in requests were received from the Arizona/Sonora and California/Baja California regions, with most focused on water projects. These regions received 90 proposals, while Texas/New Mexico border areas generated 85 proposals. Since there are far more proposals than can be funded, other funding sources are being sought. Some additional funds are available from other areas of the EPA's budget (not just border-specific funds), such as resource recovery funds for tire projects. Other federal and state agencies that work on the border are potential funding sources. Participants were encouraged to pursue these additional funds.

Representatives at the Arizona/Sonora Regional Workgroup Meeting held in Rio Rico,

The environmental coordinator for tribal issues in Arizona, Mr. Tibaldo Cañez, provided a summary of tribal concerns. Tribal lands straddle the border, and the primary issue in this region is inadequate water systems. The Tohono O'odham Nation has 70 communities, only one of which is a city, Sells. Of a total population of 20,000, most live in rural villages while 3,000 live in Sells. Half of the communities have adequate water and sewer infrastructure, but the others have severe problems.

Another major concern for tribes is illegal immigration and drug smuggling. Up to 1500 undocumented people are crossing tribal lands every day. They leave 20 tons of trash per week in the desert, and it has been accumulating for the last few years. In addition, the Border Patrol's off-road vehicles have large tires that tear up the soil.

The Cocopah Nation's concerns in the Yuma-San Luis area include open burning, especially in Mexico, as well as pesticide use in the agricultural areas around the city of Yuma, unpaved roads, lack of air monitoring, and a high level of respiratory problems on the reservations. Water supply and shared aquifers are an important concern for the Cocopah as well since they depend on agriculture as their main economic activity.

The meeting participants learned about a new communication tool from Ms. Kama Dean of the non-governmental organization, Pro Peninsula. This group has received funding from EPA to develop an

electronic bulletin board for streamlined communications among members of Border 2012 task forces and the interested public. While the bulletin board contains information similar to EPA's Border 2012 Web site, it was stressed that online discussions and various levels of security facilitate more real-time interaction among stakeholders. Anyone interested in registering for access to the bulletin board was encouraged to do so during the meeting or at their own convenience by logging on to www.border2012.net.

Each of the five Arizona-Sonora task forces gave updates on their activities. The participants of some of the task forces have worked together for several years as part of the previous U.S.-Mexico environmental program, while others have begun coming together just recently. Discussions focused on the action plans for the coming year, which are known as implementation plans under the Border 2012 program. The Implementation Plans should be ready for review by mid-summer (please refer to EPA's web site). More information for each task force—Ambos Nogales Air Quality Improvement, Chemical Preparedness and Emergency Response, Children's Environmental Health, Waste and Enforcement, and Water—is provided under specific articles within this newsletter.

Themes highlighted during the question and answer sessions included the importance of creating alliances with other agencies, participation of local stakeholders, and the need for a coordinated environmental education strategy. It was noted that the efforts of participants in the Border 2012 program would benefit from engaging with agencies with other regulatory responsibilities, such as economic development, transportation and immigration. At the federal level, there are efforts to do just that through EPA's role in the Federal Regional Council and membership of key Regional Workgroup participants in the Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB).

There is great interest in developing a coordinated environmental education strategy to support the work of the task forces. This was a continued theme from the first meeting, with audience members seeking a forum for participation. The co-chairs of the Regional Workgroup committed to fund two scoping meetings to identify partnerships for this purpose. Meetings will be announced once they are scheduled.

During the closing comments, the co-chairs thanked the audience for their participation. An announcement was made that the next meeting of the Regional Workgroup would likely be scheduled for the fall of 2004 in Sonora. Interested parties may contact ADEQ or EPA for additional information on the Regional Workgroup or any of the task forces. ■

Public Involvement is Key in Border Region

By Barbara Maco

Transparency, stakeholder participation, and community capacity are three key guiding principles* of Border 2012. All coordinating bodies that comprise the program are guided by these principles.

Two current initiatives by stakeholders are protocols for public participation in the cleanup and restoration of hazardous waste sites at the binational level and listening sessions in Arizona.

Binational guidance being drafted by the Arizona-Sonora Waste and Enforcement Task Force will outline a process to clean up and restore hazardous waste sites along the border. As part of this process, public participation objectives would (1) meet all applicable binational requirements, and (2) promote the use of site and remedy-appropriate techniques for early and meaningful public participation in cleanup decisions. Additional information on the work of this task force can be found in a related article within this newsletter.

In Arizona, EPA, ADEQ and community leaders are in the initial planning stages for conducting listening sessions in that state. The purpose of the listening sessions is to provide an opportunity for external stakeholders, including community and industry members, to frame environmental issues of concern and to work collaboratively to address priorities. The listening sessions and public participation opportunities further enable interested stakeholders to become active in the Border 2012 Program. ■

For another example on how Border 2012 task forces are developing ways to share information, increase stakeholder participation and strengthen the community's ability to participate effectively in the program, please see related articles on the Children's Environmental Health Task Force and Community Member Spotlight.

**Border 2012 Framework Document, page 3*

Border People: Co-Chairs of the Arizona/Sonora Regional Workgroup

In this edition of the Arizona/Sonora Regional Workgroup Newsletter (Summer 2004) we are highlighting the work and perspective of two co-chairs that administer the workgroup within Border 2012. This will give readers a personal look at two individuals that are working to solve environmental challenges that border communities face in the Arizona/Sonora region. We plan to continue these profiles with stories on the other two Regional Workgroup co-chairs as well as the members and leaders of the workgroup's task forces.

Laura Yoshii, Deputy Regional Administrator (DRA), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Pacific Southwest Region. As the DRA, Laura has responsibilities that cover California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, the Pacific Island Trusts Territories, Tribal lands, and the U.S.-Mexico Border area. She is EPA's national representative on the Good Neighbor Environment Board. The board is an independent federal advisory committee that advises the President and Congress of the United States on good neighbor environmental practices along the U.S. border with Mexico. It is managed by U.S. EPA under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). For more information, go to www.epa.gov/ocem. Laura is also one of the four Co-Chairs of the Arizona/Sonora Regional Workgroup. Within Border 2012, she has stressed the importance of three principal themes of the program:

- Adopting a Bottom-up Approach -- Identifying environmental priorities and creating environmental solutions to environmental challenges must come through partnerships with all sectors of society along the border.

- Environmental Results – Creating projects that lead to solid improvements in the environment and public health.

- Leveraging of Resources – No agency can do it alone. The solutions to environmental challenges are not only in the hands of the environmental agencies, but must be shared and combined with other entities to support and expand the work being done in the border region.

Laura fully supports Border 2012 and hopes to continue to foster communication with border stakeholders as well as to develop environmental indicators to measure progress toward a safer and healthier environment for this region. ■

Faustino Félix Escalante, Secretary, Sonora Secretariat of Urban Infrastructure and Ecology. Earlier, Mr. Félix Escalante was Mayor of Cajeme, the second most important municipality in Sonora. His interest in sustainable development and solutions for ecological problems led him to plan and build two wastewater treatment plants in that city during his administration.

During the last two years he was the Executive Vice President of the Arizona-Sonora Commission, an organization with a long history of international cooperation, where he promoted a work methodology that motivated the Commission to carry out its work plan. He also supported cooperation between the two border states advocating economic progress based on sustainable development. His other achievements within the Arizona-Sonora Commission include regularization of the labor force to solve the property tenancy problem in Puerto Peñasco, and an amendment to the Code of Law that creates the State Registry of Real Estate Agents.

Recently named by the State Governor, Eduardo Bours Castelo, as Secretary of Urban Infrastructure and Ecology, Mr. Félix Escalante knows that it is within the obligations of the Secretariat to move forward with construction of needed infrastructure while at the same time recognizing the urgent necessity of preserving the environment. This way, just as highways, development centers, hospitals, schools and drinking water systems are built, sanitary landfills, oxidation ponds, wastewater treatment plants and toxic waste disposal facilities are also being constructed, to assure compliance with the current environmental laws

These are the actions that Faustino Félix Escalante is promoting in the border region within the Arizona/Sonara Regional Workgroup. ■

Community Member Spotlight:

By Barbara Maco

Participation by local community members in Border 2012 efforts is a key element in accomplishing results. Beginning with this newsletter, community members active in one or more task forces in the Arizona-Sonora border region will receive recognition for their involvement and support through a spotlight article. The Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup thanks all community members supporting local initiatives and welcomes suggestions for future spotlight articles.

Teresa Leal sits on the Arizona-Sonora Children's Environmental Health Task Force and brings a wealth of local community knowledge and experience to the group. She is also a co-chair of the coordinating council for the Southwest Network of Environmental and Economic Justice and serves as coordinator for a community organization in Nogales, AZ, known as Comadres.

Comadres sponsors community training, with women talking to each other, exchanging information, and fostering parent pride and confidence so they can care for their families and work for environmental improvement. Being a mother of eight children and grandmother to 10, Teresa views her role as a bridge between bureaucracies and families, working with other mothers at wellness centers and clinics, not only in Nogales, but in Sierra Vista and Southern Tucson.

In addition to promoting more community representation on the task force, Teresa hopes to bring the work of Border 2012 to the community at events such as UNICEF Day and a fall symposium on environmental justice. She believes that neither community members nor government "can afford to do it alone," but by working together they can make progress in solving key health problems, "all for the kids." Teresa can be reached at (520) 331-2689 and Tleal@seriaz.org. ■

Tribal Update

By Tibaldo "Ty" Cañez

Tribal representatives in the Arizona-Sonora region continue their dialogue on environmental issues through a tribal caucus that was created under Border 2012. The mission of the caucus is to increase tribal participation in the decision-making process and provide input as Border 2012 is carried out. Caucus representatives are planning to meet in early 2005 prior to the National Coordinators' Meeting.

Because Tribal communities face many environmental challenges, two tribal communities in the region, Tohono O'odham Nation and the Cocopah Tribe submitted three projects for funding in response to recent Requests for Proposals. All of the proposals currently being considered for funding are designed to achieve measurable environmental improvements in the border region.

Demonstration Project to Address Solid Waste left by Undocumented Migrants

The great number of undocumented migrants crossing the Tohono O'odham Nation (Nation) lands daily leave behind large quantities of waste materials, much of which is recyclable, i.e. backpacks, blankets, clothing, metal and plastic containers. The Nation proposed and received EPA funding ($50,000) to conduct a demonstration project to find out if the amount of recyclable and reusable material would be sufficient to support a sustainable business. This study will analyze real data provided by two separate waste removal actions at different times, so that the average volume and types of waste can be calculated. Potential sites will be identified and a small work force will be assembled to clean up a few primary sites and assist in a Waste Composition Study. A report will provide an analysis of resale and recycling opportunities, labor availability, training and safety needs and transportations costs. The focus will be on the long-term viability of either a potential business venture, or a potential tribal program, or a combination of both.

Potable Water Improvements for the Mexico Tohono O'odham Community of Quito Vac

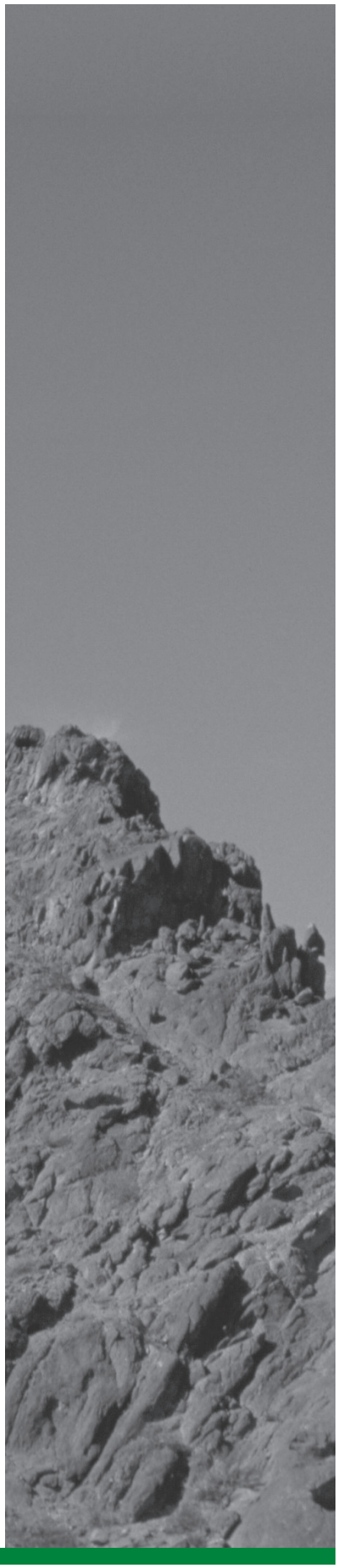
The Tohono O'odham Nation has submitted a proposal to EPA to improve the potable water facilities for the Mexico-Tohono O'odham community of Quito Vac.

The community of Quito Vac is located in northwestern Sonora, approximately 20 miles south of the Lukeville international port of entry. The water supply for the village consists of nine hand-dug shallow wells for about 17 homes. The hand-dug wells are in disrepair, all of them allowing contamination by flies, dust, insects and small animals. Water sampling conducted during November 2003 by the Tohono O'odham Nation Water Resources Office, demonstrated serious contamination by coliform bacteria and inorganic chemicals. The approximately $72,000 proposal calls for improving the water facilities by drilling a small-diameter well, and refurbishing an abandoned storage and distribution system which fell into disrepair several years ago.

Cocopah Tribe Air Quality Demonstration Project

The Cocopah Tribe of Arizona, located near Yuma, also submitted a Border 2012 funding proposal to EPA for a $50,000 demonstration study on air quality improvements by altering agricultural practices. The Cocopah Tribe has extensive agricultural operations on its lands, and its members experience serious air pollution problems due to the heavily agricultural nature of the entire region, including the Mexican side of the border. The Cocopah Tribe proposal calls for a study of farmland plowing methods to determine which methods generate the least dust and therefore could contribute to improving air quality in the region. ■

For more information on tribal issues in the Arizona-Sonora region, please contact Ty Cañez at 602-565-2752 or tycanez@msn.com



Arizona-Sonora Regional Task Forces Update

Children's Environmental Health Task Force Holds Meetings

By Norman Calero

The Arizona-Sonora Children's Environmental Health Task Force's mission is to protect and promote the environmental health of children in the Arizona/Sonora border region as part of the U.S.-Mexico Border 2012 Program. The Task Force seeks to reduce children's health risks from air pollution, drinking water contaminants, pesticides and other toxic chemical exposures. This binational Task Force has members from local and state health, environmental, and education agencies in the U.S. and Mexico, community health providers, university researchers and others from community organizations in the region.

The Task Force is currently studying the Good Neighbor Environmental Board's recently released report *Children's Environmental Health: Spotlight on the U.S.-Mexico Border*, and will focus many of its efforts in the next year on two specific recommendations: education and actions for children. Environmental threats to children can be reduced by institutionalizing a bilingual environmental health program throughout border region school systems and community groups. The Task Force has applied for a Border 2012 grant to provide a foundation for these efforts and will also focus on ways to develop and support environmental health projects that especially benefit children.

The Task Force welcomes the participation of community groups and individuals interested in improving children's environmental health along the border. Community support and involvement is critical to the success of the Task Force. Many Task Force members attended the first Southern Arizona Children's Environmental Health Forum on Friday, April 23, 2004 in Tucson, Arizona. This forum was sponsored by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality's Children's Environmental Health Project. The Project is directed by Alice S. Wallwork, ADEQ Special Assistant for Children's Environmental Health.

The last Children's Environmental Health Task Force meeting was held on May 20. 2004 in Nogales, Sonora. To learn more about this Task Force or become an active participant, please contact either of the co-chairs: Edith Frías Bustos of SEMARNAT in Sonora at 662-259-27-21 or Alice S. Wallwork of ADEQ at 602-771-2231. ■

Ambos Nogales Air Quality Improvement Task Force

By Yvonne W. Fong

The Ambos Nogales Air Quality Improvement Task Force continues to meet jointly with the Border Liaison Mechanism Economic and Social Development Subgroup since its designation by the Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup in June 2003. The Task Force meets every three months and is currently focusing its efforts on evaluating the feasibility of projects to improve the air quality in Ambos Nogales, and moving ahead with feasible projects.

The Task Force is currently working on a Plan of Action to Improve Air Quality in Ambos Nogales. This report will describe the twelve recommended actions the Task Force has identified as necessary to reduce particulate matter, the area's largest air pollution concern. These recommended actions include measures to control dust and other particulates from unpaved roads and parking lots, vehicles, soil erosion, and residential wood and garbage burning. Agencies from the US and Mexico have been identified to develop action plans which would include projects to achieve the twelve recommended actions. As of their last meeting on March 24, 2004, six action plans to measure emissions reductions, implementation, and project progress have been developed by the Task Force members. The Task Force has also agreed to formally endorse project proposals through a letter jointly issued by the co-chairs. This will help ensure that projects are recognized as being supported by the Task Force when considered for funding.

The next Ambos Nogales Air Quality Task Force meeting will be held on June 23, 2004. Additional draft action plans and progress on existing action plans will be presented. For more information or to have your name added to the mailing for meeting notices, in the U.S. please contact Michèle Kimpel Guzmán of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, at (520) 628-6717 or (888) 271-9302 (toll free in the US) or kimpelguzman.michele@ev.state.az.us. In Sonora, please contact Ángel López Guzmán, Sonora Secretariat of Urban Infrastructure and Ecology, at 52-662-213-1966 or arkilopez@yahoo.com.mx ■

Water Task Force

By Eugenia McNaughton

The first public meeting of the Border 2012 Sonora/Arizona Water Task Force convened on Monday, March 29, 2004 at the Comisión de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado del Estado de Sonora (COAPAES) office in Nogales, Sonora. Representatives from the Comisión Nacional del Agua (CNA) in Hermosillo, the Comision Estatal del Agua (CEA), COAPAES, the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR), the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), state and federal water agencies were joined by representatives of Tohono O'odham, University of Arizona, and International Boundary Water Comission and, by phone, Border Ecology Project in a discussion of common concerns about water quality and quantity in the region. The water agencies have been meeting since August 2003, developing a way to work together across state, national and tribal boundaries.

The Water Task Force agreed that its primary function is to be a strong communication link between agencies for the exchange of information. The Border 2012 water goals and objectives define the range of projects that can be brought to the Task Force for EPA funding consideration. However, given the fact that both CNA and ADWR have responsibility for water quantity issues, the Water Task Force has widened its area of discussion to include both quality and quantity.

The Border 2012 Water Task Force plans to hold public meetings throughout the Arizona/Sonora border area in the coming months. The proposed schedule is as follows:

- Friday, June 25 in Agua Prieta, SON (COAPAES)
- Friday, July 23 in Sells, AZ (location to be determined)

Watch for meeting announcements on the BECCnet, www.cocef.org, and the US EPA Border 2012 Web site, http://www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder/ ■

Arizona-Sonora Waste And Enforcement Task Force

By Edna Mendoza

The long history of the Waste and Enforcement Task Force (WETF) has facilitated moving projects from concept to implementation. The WETF supports specific focus areas within the Border 2012 program – Goal 3, to reduce land contamination associated with hazardous and solid waste, and Goal 6, to strengthen compliance and enforcement, and promotion of voluntary/self audit programs. Projects identified by the task force as priorities are those that reinforce these goals.

A priority project under Goal 3 includes a $50,000 grant to the Tohono O'odham Nation to conduct an assessment of open dumping and the accumulation of trash caused by the volume of people illegally crossing the border and moving through tribal lands. The emphasis of the project is to identify and develop long-term solutions (also see article on page 5). Additionally, the borderwide Waste Policy Forum plans to hold a meeting on how to encourage waste infrastructure development. The information from this meeting will be used to develop an action plan. SEMARNAT has already indicated that they would like to see several hazardous waste disposal facilities developed. The WETF's role in this borderwide process is to identify regional priorities for the Arizona-Sonora region, which now include solvent recycling and disposal facilities for tires, used oil and solid and hazardous wastes.

The task force has also initiated two key projects that focus on Goal 6. One is to build upon existing partnerships with industry and implement a training program for small- to medium-sized maquiladoras on developing an environmental management system (EMS). The emphasis of the project is to provide the technical support needed to develop an EMS. This is usually beyond the financial resources of the target groups, including local municipal governments. The project will offer mentoring support as active participants work toward full implementation. Another effort to support this goal is a collaborative project with U.S. and Mexican Customs that addresses how to sample potentially hazardous substances at the border ports to satisfy the enforcement needs of both countries. While samples can be independently collected by either U.S. or Mexican officials in their own territory, the cross-border transfer of hazardous waste highlights the need to establish procedures and protocol for physical evidence collection during binational compliance exercises. Both projects are expected to be in progress by summer 2004.

Pending projects that the task force wants to move forward include the cleanup of a waste tire site and the revitalization of contaminated sites that have been abandoned. Funds are available for demonstration projects to identify potential alternatives and resources to address the accumulation of waste tires. Many reuse possibilities exist for the tire problem, but the infrastructure is costly. Solutions will depend on local resources, and community members that are willing to take lead roles in these projects. The task force is also participating in the development of a binational policy to encourage redevelopment, and address liability issues that may be impeding the use of these sites.

The WETF has not traditionally held its meetings in an open forum due to the enforcement nature of discussions. Recognizing the value that stakeholder involvement and support has on accomplishing priorities, public sessions will now be incorporated into task force meetings. Anyone interested in attending the meeting or becoming involved in the projects described above may contact Ed Ranger or Edna Mendoza of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality at 520-628-6733, or Emily Pimentel of the U.S. EPA at 415-972-3326 in the U.S. In Sonora, interested parties may contact Ing. Francisco Maytorena of the Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente, Delegación Sonora at 652-217-54-53. ■

Sharing Resources:

U.S./Mexico Border Emergency Response Equipment and Assistance Program: www.E-REAP.org

By Lauren Volpini

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region IX has started a program to facilitate the donation of used and surplus emergency response equipment and other resources in the Arizona/Sonora and California/Baja California border area. This project meets the Goal #5 of the Border 2012 Program to reduce border communities' exposure to chemical substances as the result of accidental releases and/or acts of terrorism by improving the preparedness of first responders on both sides of the border.

A Pressing Need

Many border communities do not have adequate personal protection or emergency response equipment to protect the public health and the environment from accidental or deliberate releases of hazardous materials. A major problem is that the equipment that many border communities possess is often outdated or in disrepair. Funding shortages make it difficult for first responders to obtain training that would improve their ability to handle a wider range of emergencies, beyond the most basic. Yet border cities are the most vulnerable to releases, given the high concentration of cross-border manufacturing operations found there as well as the constant transportation of hazardous materials through their communities.

While border communities struggle to operate with scarce resources, many larger communities throughout California, Arizona and other states regularly dispose of used but perfectly serviceable equipment when they purchase newer models. Manufacturers, distributors or retailers may have an overstock of brand new computers, office supplies or furniture, or may just want to help first responders in need. Trainers of emergency response or hazardous materials management courses may have extra seats in their classes because of cancellations, or because the room is big enough to hold more than have registered. Surplus equipment is often available from sources such as the military, federal and state agencies, businesses, cleanup contracting firms, and manufacturers; this program seeks to identify these potential donors and pair them with those who need the resources.

Examples of the kinds of equipment, training and other resources that could be provided through this program are:

- **Vehicles** – Fire engines, trailers, tankers, ambulances, cars, trucks, boats, helicopters, airplanes, bulldozers
- **Emergency response equipment** – Hoses, ladders, radios, rappelling gear, jaws of life, extinguishers, firefighting foams, hand tools, spill pads, computers, office furniture, office supplies
- **Personal protective equipment** – Chemical suits, chemical test kits, uniforms, boots, hard hats, respirators, decontamination gear, tents, first aid kits
- **Training** - Emergency medical, hazardous materials, fire prevention, incident command, confined space entry, counter-terrorism, preparedness, traffic control, community relations, media relations, evacuation, emergency management, exercise design.

The Program

A web-based system has been developed to match donations of equipment and other resources with communities that can use them. The website is e-reap.org. The primary recipients for this program will be the emergency responders in the Arizona/Sonora and California/Baja California area. The program will include promotion and outreach to potential donors in Mexico, California and Arizona, such as larger fire departments, industry, military, manufacturers, business organizations, professional associations, and private sector emergency response departments.

In addition to helping border communities, donors may receive an added benefit: contributions to U.S. state, local, tribal agencies, nonprofit organizations and some Mexican charities can be tax deductible. If the recipient does not meet the criteria for tax deductibility, the E-REAP project manager will help the donor find an eligible charitable organization through which the donation can be made.

The website operates in a simple, user-friendly way. Donors are able to post information about the available items or services including pictures, on a website that operates like a message board. The E_REAP project manager will screen postings, contact the poster for any additional information that may be needed and help identify potential recipients. On the website, potential recipients are able to search for and browse available offerings. If a potential recipient is interested in a particular item, they are able to send a message to the donor to inquire further and arrange for delivery.

Emergency response agencies also are able to post a description of needed items or services. Potential donors are able to search for and browse these requests for assistance to identify those that they are able to support. The website is hosted by a well-known and proven message board system. The program is now operational.

The key to the ultimate success, longevity and transferability of the E-REAP project will be its ability to establish a system that is independently sustainable, based on ongoing contributions and sponsorships. ■

What You Can Do

- **Please visit our web site at www.e-reap.org.**
- **Review your emergency response equipment inventory.**
- **Identify surplus items.**
- **When you update equipment in the future, consider donating replaced items to this program.**
- **Volunteer your time, funding, training or expertise to help make this program a success.**

Arizona/Sonora Regional Workgroup Co-Chairs

Laura Yoshii Deputy Regional Administrator U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region IX	**Stephen A. Owens** Director Arizona Department of Environmental Quality	**Ing. Florencio Díaz Armenta** Delegate Sonora Secretariat for Environment and Natural Resources	**Humberto D. Valdés Ruy Sánchez** Secretary Sonora Secretariat of Urban Infrastructure and Ecology

Task Force Co-Chairs

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