

Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB)
January 16, 2009
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.
Teleconference Summary

Mark Joyce, GNEB Designated Federal Officer, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), introduced GNEB Chair Dr. Paul Ganster, who thanked everyone who had contributed to the GNEB Twelfth Report. Dr. Ganster explained that the purpose of the call was to review and approve the current draft of the report. The GNEB's focus should be on substantive instead of editorial issues, because the language will be edited. If there are specific passages or language that any agency believes needs modification, please inform the GNEB at this time. It may become necessary to appoint a few Board members to work on changes and determine acceptable language, but if the GNEB can approve the idea under consideration, the task can be completed without a need for further discussion by the Board.

Ann-Marie Gantner, EPA, will be responsible for organizing the illustrations for the report, and will send requests and instructions to the GNEB members. Members also should submit a list of people who helped with the report for inclusion in the note of thanks that will be placed at the end of the report.

During the call, Board members will review the document and discuss substantive changes and comments. There is, for the most part, agreement that the recommendations reflect points raised throughout the body of the report and in the case studies. The GNEB should not go off target with new recommendations that are not linked to the case studies and other material. Any changes made must be consistent throughout the document. Specific corrections and comments should be sent to Dr. Ganster and Mary Spock, The Scientific Consulting Group, Inc., who will edit the document.

Discussion of the Inside Cover: About the Board

Dr. Ganster noted that this text has been used before, and aside from updating, it should not require revision. There were no comments from call participants.

Discussion of the Tribute to Carlos Marin

Dr. Ganster stated that the tribute would be located prominently at the beginning of the report, and would include a photograph of Mr. Marin. A statement that the report is "dedicated to our colleague, Carlos Marin," should be added. There were no comments from call participants.

Discussion of the Executive Summary

Dr. Ganster suggested an addition to the bullet on wind power, adding "windpower to address regional and clean, reliable energy demand."

Discussion of the Recommendations

Dr. Ganster thanked everyone who worked on the recommendations, and thanked GNEB members and call participants for their willingness to compromise on language that may not be perfect, but is sufficient to express the desired meaning. This is necessary with the Board's consensus approach.

Hans Huth, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), noted that the comment that ADEQ submitted was too specific and not reflected in the case study, so it was withdrawn. He offered one edit in the recommendations: in the statement “local binational Border 2012 task forces that include all stakeholders and build participation, transborder networking and regional capacity,” capacity should change to capacity building. That would address the omission that caused concern for ADEQ. Dr. Ganster agreed that the change made sense and should be made.

Jose Garcia, EPA Region 9, noted that he had submitted comments on the first recommendation, but was not sure if the Board had received them. He inserted a sentence after “subsidies” stating that this approach should support the recent recommendations from the 2008 Border Governors Conference. Dr. Ganster explained that there was not much discussion of the 2008 Border Governors Conference in the body of the report, so the change was not included. Mr. Garcia thanked the Board for considering the recommendation.

Discussion of the Introduction

In the two tables relating to the case study key elements, Mr. Huth noted an opportunity to add “capacity building” as a third point after “financing that allows for innovation and problem solving.” Dr. Ganster agreed with the change. Additionally, Mr. Huth stated that there needs to be a mechanism by which other municipalities can tap into the work that is being highlighted by this report and learn the technologies that are used. If financing can be made available to act as a catalyst toward that goal, it would be valuable. Dr. Ganster agreed that it would increase the sustainability of the useful projects highlighted.

Discussion of the Border Context Section

Dr. Ganster noted that in the second paragraph, the statement “paradoxically, the border counties show significant asymmetries when compared to the rest of the United States,” should include the following: “with the exception of San Diego County,” which is notable for its large economy and high per capita income. This distinction is raised in the text box. Mike Connolly, Campo Kumeyaay Nation, held that this fact only was true along the coast: the rural half of San Diego County is one of the poorest border areas. Dr. Ganster agreed, but explained that county-level statistics folded all the regions together. Mr. Joyce noted that in the text box on the border region as the 51st state, San Diego should either be included or excluded instead of included or excluded from bullet-to-bullet. Dr. Ganster explained that the point of the box is to illustrate that the border is a poor region compared to the rest of the United States, but this point can be reexamined if everyone agrees.

Discussion of the Case Studies

The Summary section at the end of each of the case studies has been changed to Conclusions. Specific references and footnotes are included with the case studies, as are the “Points to Consider” but the “Key Partners” and “Contact Information” have been moved to the Appendices because they interfered with the flow of the text. This way, the information is still accessible to interested readers. This change was discussed at the last call.

Paul Moinester, U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), noted that Linda Lawson, DOT, who was not present on the call, was concerned that the results of the case studies are not clearly noted for readers who may be skimming the text. He had noticed that the Points to Consider

section was expanded, and contains some of that information, but Ms. Lawson wanted the results of the specific case studies clearly visible. Ann Marie Wolf, Sonora Environmental Research Institute, Inc., noted that she and Dr. Austin moved some of the case study results into the key points based on Ms. Lawson's comments. Dr. Ganster added that some of the changes were quite minor, but altered the content. Time does not allow for changes to be made in every case study. The results of the case studies are clear, although they might not be as accessible as possible, they are emphasized in the key points. Unless the GNEB receives specific recommendations, changes cannot be made at this point in the report. He asked that anyone with specific suggestions for additions to the key points send them in. If the comments do not alter the tenor and content of the report, they can be included without consulting the Board.

In the study on fibrous concrete, Dr. Ganster had a question about whether it was fibrous concrete bricks or blocks that were produced. The study was written by Diane Austin, University of Arizona, who was not present on this call.

For the scrap tire cleanup study, Allyson Siwik, Gila Resources Information Project, submitted comments in tracked changes, but these were not included in the most recent draft. She noted that she would resend them.

There were no comments or questions on the Upper San Pedro Partnership study.

In the Kay Bailey Hutchison Desalination Plant study, Sally Spener, International Boundary and Water Commission, indicated that she had some corrections that she would resend. Ms. Wolf submitted a comment that was not addressed, and noted that she would resend it. Mr. Joyce noted that any clarifications that should go to Ms. Spock with a copy to Dr. Ganster. Dr. Ganster noted that if he or Ms. Spock had questions on the comments, they would contact the person who submitted them. Ms. Spener submitted figures for the Fort Bliss population as of 2008. These numbers are categorized by troops, troops and family, and others living on the base.

In the study on the Brawley and Imperial wetlands, Ms. Spener sent revised text on the New River Wetlands project to clarify the issue of the Alamo River. Most of this was included in the new draft, but all of the changes were not addressed, so she planned to resubmit them. She added that she also would submit contact information on the New River wetlands and desalination study. Dr. Ganster asked if Ms. Spener would clarify that the Alamo River is not involved in the wetlands discussed in the report. Ms. Spener replied it is not. He added that EPA input on this study was helpful. He also spoke with a San Diego State University researcher who has been working on the selenium issue in the wetlands, who agreed that the Board's modifications to the text convey the point that it is a very successful effort in terms of cleaning up the water with the exception of selenium, which does accumulate, and this will have to be clarified by additional research and experimentation. Ms. Spener added that the point also had been made in the research.

Ms. Wolf noted that she had spoken with Dr. Austin regarding the Bahía Grande case study, and she was concerned that GNEB member John Wood, Cameron County, Texas Commissioner, had not reviewed the section. Dr. Ganster said he would send the section to Mr. Wood and ask him if any corrections were necessary.

Dr. Ganster had asked Alan Sweedler, San Diego State University, to review the Campo Kumeyaay case study. Dr. Sweedler had presented to the GNEB on border energy at its meeting in Calexico, and he thought that the section was well written. This shows that the GNEB is on target. With Mike Connolly, Campo Kumeyaay Nation, involved in writing the study, there was sufficient expertise to craft an excellent study.

There were no comments or questions on the CETYS University Master's Degree program.

Dr. Ganster has added quite a bit of material to the transboundary emissions case study in response to some of the questions received, including specific data about the effect of the new kiln design on various pollutants from El Paso Electric Company and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality studies. Ms. Wolf stated that GNEB member Steve Niemeyer had submitted some comments on this case study in response to EPA's comments. Dr. Ganster responded that he had received them and incorporated them into changes sent to Ms. Spock; they are included in the most recent draft. Ms. Wolf added that she and Mr. Niemeyer both were concerned about the change in tone in the case study. Dr. Ganster believed that the changes made should correct the problem.

There were no comments or questions on the Joint Advisory Committee case study.

Ms. Wolf will forward one small correction on the CASA case study.

There were no comments or questions on the new spray gun case study.

Mr. Huth noted that in the waste-based biodiesel study, one key point states "sufficient waste vegetable oil for biodiesel production is generated in cafeterias and restaurants on both sides of the Arizona-Sonora border, and maquiladoras in Sonora." Mr. Huth will provide some specific numbers and a reference to this further down in the report. The GNEB should consider eliminating that bullet and replacing it with: "use of biodiesel generated from waste vegetable oil characterized to date could potentially offset close to 200 tons of CO₂ per year that would otherwise be released from fossil sources." This provides a metric, and also mentions climate change, which is a priority for the incoming administration. Ms. Wolf noted that Dr. Austin objected to that change, so Mr. Huth will need to discuss it with her because there is a debate on whether the waste is being produced or not. Mr. Huth noted that biodiesel does generate CO₂, but it is recycling atmospheric CO₂ versus releasing CO₂ stored underground. He added that he would contact Dr. Austin because this fact is a benefit in using waste products for fuel production. Dr. Ganster proposed that the GNEB approve the decision that Mr. Huth and Dr. Austin make regarding this point; there were no objections.

Regarding the key partners and contact information, Dr. Ganster noted that those members familiar with the case studies should review the lists to ensure that they are accurate and include all relevant parties. Members should send any additions or changes to Ms. Spock.

Closing Remarks and Logistics

Dr. Ganster apologized for the fact that the report process was running late this year due to some staff turnovers. However, he was confident that the report would be ready for the March GNEB meeting in Washington, DC. He noted that Ms. Gantner would contact GNEB members the following week regarding travel plans for the meeting. Ms. Gantner added that she also would contact members about an updated membership roster for the report.

There were no further comments from GNEB members or call participants. Dr. Ganster thanked the members for the tremendous amount of effort they put into the report, in particular Ms. Wolf and Dr. Austin, Ms. Spener, Mr. Niemeyer, Ms. Siwik, and staff from EPA, DOT, and the state departments of environmental quality.

Mr. Joyce also thanked those who contributed to the report, noting that although the process was delayed for a number of reasons, the report is on schedule to be completed for the March GNEB meeting.

Action Items

- Ms. Ganter will send the following e-mails to GNEB members: requests and instructions for illustrations for the report, requests for updated membership roster information, requests for a list of people who helped with the report for inclusion in the note of thanks, and information for travel plans for the March 2009 GNEB meeting in Washington, DC.
- GNEB members should send specific corrections and comments on the report to Dr. Ganster and Ms. Spock.
- Ms. Wolf, Ms. Spener, and Ms. Siwik will resend comments that were not addressed in the most current draft of the report.
- Mr. Huth and Dr. Austin will discuss the key points in the waste biodiesel case study and decide what will be included.
- Dr. Ganster will ensure that GNEB member John Wood reviews the Bahía Grande case study, and that his changes and comments are incorporated.

PARTICIPANTS

NONGOVERNMENTAL, STATE, LOCAL, OR TRIBAL MEMBERS

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These minutes are an accurate description of the matters discussed during this meeting.

Paul Ganster
Chair
Good Neighbor Environmental Board

The Good Neighbor Environmental Board was created by the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative Act of 1992. The Board is responsible for providing advice to the President and Congress on environmental and infrastructure issues and needs within the states contiguous to Mexico. The findings and recommendations of the Board do not represent the views of the Agency, and this document does not represent information approved or disseminated by the Environmental Protection Agency.