

Border 2020 Quarterly Newsletter

Region 9

California, Baja California, Arizona and Sonora
Summer-Fall 2013

www.epa.gov/border2020



This newsletter provides a summary of past quarter activities

General Updates

EPA and Cal/EPA Border Teams Brief Congressional & State Legislative Staff

On July 30th, the Region 9 Border Team and Cal/EPA briefed Staff from 11 California Federal and State Congressional/Legislative Offices along the California-Mexico Border, in the EPA San Diego Border Office. Key briefing items included a brief showing of the [Border 2012](#) accomplishments video, a summary of the new Border 2020 Program, 2-year action plans, upcoming programmatic priorities, and the Border Request for Proposal. Cal/EPA, represented by the leadership of the San Diego and Colorado River Water Boards, presented on current bi-national efforts focused on the New River and Tijuana River watersheds.

The eleven representatives in attendance, included staff from the offices of Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer; Representatives Juan Vargas and Scott Peters; State Assembly Members Brian Jones, Shirley Weber, Lorena Gonzales, Toni Atkins and State Senators Marty Block, Mark Wyland and Ben Hueso. **Contact:** [Brent Maier](#), 415-947-4256

EPA Border Program Engages HHS on Border Environmental Health Efforts

On August 16th, members of the EPA Border Team briefed the new Executive Director of the U.S. Section of the [U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission](#) (USMBHC), Jose Luis Velasco, on the draft Collaborative agreement between EPA, Border 2020, HHS and the USMBHC to improve the Environment and Public Health along the U.S. Mexico Border. Key actions within the agreement include intra-agency collaboration during Binational Border Health week (each October), a State of the Border Environmental Health Report (to document status and trends), the drafting of a new Healthy Border 2020 Program within the Border Health Commission (we would help draft the environmental health portion), and the development of a Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit along the border. Formal announcement of the collaboration will be made soon. **Contact:** [Alheli Baños-Keener](#), 619-235-4767

Assistant Administrator (AA) for EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs (Michelle DePass) visits the Border

AA Michelle DePass (OITA) represented EPA in a "Border Philanthropic Partnership Convening" on September 25-26, hosted by the local [U.S.-Mexico Border Philanthropy Partnership](#). Funders were invited to participate in the Convening as part of the National Council on Foundations' annual funders meeting which took place in San Diego earlier that week. The event included a tour of the U.S.-Mexico Border, and a visit to the [Tijuana Estuary](#) in San Diego followed by a half day panel discussion focused on fostering philanthropic giving towards border environmental and public health efforts. National, Regional, and



Former AA DePass and Gonzalo Bravo (BECC), in front of a Tijuana neighborhood

local foundations were present for both, the tour and the panel discussions. Michelle DePass recently left EPA to become the Dean of the Milano School of International Affairs, Management, and Urban Policy at the New School in New York. Jane Nishida is now the Acting AA. **Contact:** [Tomas Torres](#), 619-235-4775

Border 2020 Request for Proposals (RFP) Update

The Region 9 RFP for the new Border 2020 Program was released on June 17th, in coordination with Region 6 and the [Border Environment Cooperation Commission](#) (BECC). The RFP identified priority “project types” that will help advance the bi-national commitments made in the Border 2020 Program. To further develop community capacity to compete for these funds, five RFP Workshops were held in California/Baja California and Arizona/Sonora. 51 Proposals were received in Region 9, seeking over \$3.2 million in funding (\$1million is available). EPA is working closely with BECC (via our EPA Cooperative Agreement) to identify the most qualified proposals by early December. Additional consideration is given to proposals that leverage funding, that demonstrate U.S. side benefits (for projects taking place in Mexico), that account for long term sustainability beyond the border funding, and that partner with border organizations to build local capacity. Due to the government shutdown in October, grant selection announcements will be made in December. **Contact:** [Lorena Lopez-Powers](#), 619-235-4767.

E-Messages from “US-Mexico Border 2020 Program” through *Constant Contact*: Electronic communication is being sent through our new electronic communication provider Constant Contact, updating subscriber on accomplishments, meetings, and other activities. If you would like to be added to the e-list, please contact one of the communication team members: [Patrick Huber](#) (Office of International and Tribal Affairs); [Maria Sisneros](#) (Region 6); and, [Alhelí Baños-Keener](#) (Region 9).

Goal Updates

Goal 1 – Reduce Air Pollution

Project Update: Documenting the Economic Costs to Border Human Health from Air Contamination

The [Autonomous University of Baja California \(UABC\)](#) recently completed a Border 2020-funded project that researched the economic impacts associated with poor air quality along the Baja California Border with the United States. The report concludes that CO and PM pollution have a measurable impact on human health and on the economy of border communities. The report provides data on the number of asthma episodes that translate into lost wages and time lost at work. The report provides that by using statistical methods, it is possible to estimate these impacts and project the economic impacts to the community if CO and PM pollution goes unabated for the foreseeable future. It is conversely possible to estimate the beneficial impact on human health and economic impacts as CO and PM pollution is reduced. The final report is in Spanish and is currently being translated. **Contact:** [Dave Fege](#), 619-235-4769.

Goal 2 – Improve Access to Clean and Safe Water

Update on Nogales Arizona’s Sediment Removal Efforts

In July, the City of Nogales, Sonora, approved funding for the removal of sediment from behind their rock dams. These flow-detention devices, built in 2009 with support from the Border 2012 program, have proven highly effective at reducing local flooding and the sanitary sewer overflows that such flooding can cause. The City’s commitment to the continued maintenance of these devices and its interest in constructing more dams indicate that this demonstration project has been both effective and sustainable. **Contact:** [Doug Liden](#), 619-235-4763

Wastewater Projects Certified in Holtville, CA

On May 9, 2013, the [BECC-NADB](#) Board of Directors certified two wastewater projects in Holtville, CA that will benefit over 6000 residents. These projects will provide service to a small neighborhood with failed on-site systems and will replace the main transmission pipeline that conveys wastewater from the city to the treatment plant, thereby eliminating discharges and leaks of inadequately treated sewage. Construction contracts are already being procured for these projects, which will utilize about \$2M in [EPA's Border Environment Infrastructure Funds \(BEIF\)](#) along with USDA-Rural Development grant and loan funds. **Contact:** [Su Cox](#), 415-972-3555.

Workshop on Sediment Modeling for the Tijuana Watershed

On June 5th, the San Diego Border Office and the City of San Diego hosted a one-day workshop and webinar on sediment modeling for the [Tijuana Watershed](#). Over 50 participants from 5 border universities, as well as city, state, and federal government agencies from both sides of the border convened at the Tijuana Estuary Visitor Center to learn about EPA's Regional Applied Research Effort (RARE) and Border 2020-funded project to model the sediment runoff in the watershed that could result under various land-use scenarios. Participants also provided input on their expectations for the modeling effort. **Contact:** [Doug Liden](#), 619-235-4763

Study Proposes Improvements for the Wastewater Treatment Plant in San Ysidro

In August, 2013, a contractor to the [Border Environment Cooperation Committee](#) (BECC), CDM Smith, completed a study with EPA funds to examine alternatives for reducing the volume of bio-solids produced at the [International Treatment Plant in San Ysidro](#). Due to the recent upgrade of the plant to secondary treatment, solids have increased by about 30%. The solids produced at the plant are currently only lime-stabilized and sent back to Mexico (Punta Bandera) in an area that is expected to run out of space within 2 years. The study proposed an alternative that could reduce the volume of sludge by approximately 35%, while creating natural gas for vehicles that would equate to 150,000 gallons per year. The study estimated that the capital costs for such a project would be approximately \$52M. **Contact:** [Doug Liden](#), 619-235-4763

EPA Partners with the San Diego Foundation to repurpose trash in the Tijuana River Valley

In August, the [San Diego Foundation](#) and EPA awarded \$45,000 to 4Walls International to construct bi-national park space that uses trash pulled from the Tijuana River Valley and tributary canyons as building materials. The re-purposed trash might have otherwise entered the Tijuana River, negatively impacting the fragile ecosystem of the [Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve in San Diego](#).



Trash-filled bottles will become park benches

The \$25,000 grant from EPA and the \$20,000 grant from the San Diego Foundation will be used by 4Walls and other local U.S. and Mexican Non-profit organizations for work at both the Los Sauces Park in Tijuana and the entrance to [Border Field State Park](#) in San Diego. [Mexico's Environment Ministry \(SEMARNAT\)](#) also contributed significant resources to employ approximately 100 people for 12 weeks through their "Temporary Employment Program" to clean the park and replace invasive vegetation with native plants. **Contact:** [Doug Liden](#), 619-235-4763

Goal 3 –Promoting Materials and Waste Management and Clean Sites

End-of-Life Electronics Best Management Practices Webinar: Consistent with Border 2020's commitment to develop the U.S.-Mexico border region's capacity to manage e-waste, on November 5, EPA (Regions 9 and 6) partnered with BECC to launch the first of several webinars on electronic waste



management. This first webinar was led by Kelley Keogh of Greeneye Partners, to explain the [Responsible Recycling \(R2\) voluntary certification standard](#) that provides for the safe collection, reuse, dismantling, recycling and discard of electronic components when they reach their end-of-life. The webinar was designed to raise awareness about the voluntary e-waste standard so that border stakeholders (business, government, academia, and the public) can be more knowledgeable about what to look for when engaging recyclers to collect electronics for reuse or recycling. A link to the [webinar video recordings](#) can be found on the Border 2020 webpage, under the Region 9 “past meetings” tab. A second webinar is being planned that will focus on the e-Stewards certification process. **Contact:** [Emily Pimentel](#), 415-972-3326



Compost piles

Tijuana Urban Compost Center Promotes Zero Waste Practices: [Tijuana Calidad de Vida \(TCV\)](#) has processed approximately 110 tons (of the 150 tons committed in their Border 2020 grant) and hosted one of two planned “Feria Organica” (green fair). The Green Fair held on July 6 was attended by approximately 200 people and included 20 vendors promoting green products and educational practices, including composting of food scraps in the home. A video of the “Feria de Organicos is available in the attached link (in Spanish only): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbCO435XaP8>. **Contact:** [Emily Pimentel](#), 415-972-3326

A Compost Forum is planned for late November and it will be sponsored by the U.S. Consulate in Tijuana and the BECC. The forum will provide a venue to discuss technical, market, economic, and regulatory considerations for advancing composting programs derived from food scraps, landscape, and agriculture organic material. TCV has developed a Compost Quality Assurance Plan and Compost Health & Safety Manual to help other municipalities and organizations develop their own urban compost programs. **Contact:** [Emily Pimentel](#), 415-972-3326

Update: Arizona Border Trash Mitigation Efforts. The [Tohono O’odham Nation \(TON\)](#) removed 13 tons of trash and 101 bikes from 109 sites including the Chukut Kuk District, which is one of twelve districts in the Nation. Chukut Kuk sustains the most impacts due to significant foot traffic from international crossers and smugglers, as it is the District closest to the international border. On September 10, Gary Olson of TON attended the BLM Borderlands Task Force meeting, where he shared problems in removing the abandoned vehicles due to poor road conditions, worsened by the monsoon rains. It is now nearly impossible to move heavy equipment in non-road areas to remove abandoned vehicles and thus their removal has been placed on hold. Mr. Olson continues to work with [Arizona](#)



Abandoned trash



The community garden in the Colonia Luis Donado Colosio

[Department of Environmental Quality \(ADEQ\)](#) to enter cleanup data on [ADEQ’s Border Trash website](#). The website has made reporting more uniform and accessible to government agencies and the public. **Contact:** [Emily Pimentel](#), 415-972-3326.

Tecate Community Makes Big Leap in Materials Management Goal. Through a Border 2012-funded project, [Fundación la Puerta](#), a community non-profit organization in Tecate, Baja California in association with “Comite Mujeres Lluvia del Sur” have completed a landmark effort to promote practices for more sustainable communities. Their efforts included recycling plastics, paper, and recovering organics to

produce compost, establish a community garden, and build institutional capacity to sustain future efforts. Visit the Border 2020 webpage for a [fact sheet on this project](#). **Contact:** [Emily Pimentel](#), 415-972-3326

Building Local Capacity to Manage Solid Waste in Tijuana

Through a Border 2012 grant, two non-profit organizations, [Wildcoast](#) (San Diego) and [ECOCE](#) (a Mexican non-profit plastics recycling organization) partnered with three elementary schools in the Los Laureles Community of Tijuana (adjacent to the U.S.-Mexico Border) to educate over 780 elementary school children, 78 teachers, and school administrators on the importance of recycling in schools and at home to prevent plastics from becoming trash that eventually flows into the Tijuana River Estuary in San Diego. Children were encouraged to create and/or join environmental clubs and were trained on repurposing materials such as plastic. Together, the school community collected 11 supersacs of plastic bottles equivalent to 99 square feet of plastic. **Contact:** [Emily Pimentel](#), 415-972-3326



Presentation at an Elementary School

Goal 4 – Emergency Preparedness and Response

EPA and NorthCom sign MOU to support Emergency Preparedness and Response in the Border Region

In May, EPA and the [Department of Defense's Northern Command](#) (NorthCom) signed a new Memorandum of Understanding to support cooperation on emergency response capacity building along the U.S.-Mexico border. The new MOU will allow the two agencies to collaborate on mutually beneficial projects such as knowledge exchange events, table top exercises, hazmat training, and providing emergency response equipment to Mexican emergency responders. The new MOU will be in effect until May, 2018. **Contact:** [Lida Tan](#), 415-972-3018

Bi-national Emergency Response Exercises Commemorate PROFEPA's 20th Anniversary

On July 12, 2003, six bi-national sister cities conducted emergency response exercises as part of [The Federal Attorney for Environmental Protection \(PROFEPA\)](#) 20th anniversary celebration. All six bi-national sister city contingency plans were activated during the exercises. The [National EPA-Mexico Joint Contingency Plan](#) was activated at the Tijuana/San Diego exercise. EPA Region 9 (Kay Lawrence) and EPA Region 6 (Brandi Todd) participated in the Tijuana/San Diego exercise and the pre-exercise training on July 10 to brief the participants on the Joint Contingency Plan activation procedures. EPA's Washington and San Francisco Emergency Operations Centers received notifications during the exercise. **Contact:** [Lida Tan](#), 415-972-3018



Train cars spilled 120,000 liters of sulfuric acid along the U.S.-Mexico Border

Emergency Response Training put to the Test during Sulfuric Acid Train Derailment

On August 6, a northbound train containing twelve sulfuric acid tank cars was derailed between Cananea and Naco, Sonora, Mexico, 32 miles south of the U.S.-Mexico border. A collapsed wood bridge caused the derailment. Four cars ruptured, two of which emptied their entire cargo totaling 90,000 liters of sulfuric acid. The sulfuric acid traveled approximately 800 meters. The total amount of sulfuric acid leaked is estimated at 120,000 liters. There were no injuries or deaths from the incident. The Border 2020 Emergency Response Task Force will facilitate a meeting in the near future to discuss the incident and lessons learned. **Contact:** [Lida Tan](#), 415-972-3018

Goal 5 – Enhance Compliance Assurance and Environmental Stewardship



Participants of the enforcement Workshop and webinar

Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Workshop: On June 13 and 14 the Border 2020 Program sponsored an Environmental Compliance & Enforcement Workshop in San Diego, CA. The goal of the two-day workshop was to strengthen communication and information sharing, build capacity of enforcement professionals, and define compliance and enforcement priorities relevant to the new Border 2020 Program. The 2-day workshop included one day of expert presentations (which were also delivered by webinar in English and Spanish), followed by a second day of interactive dialogue amongst participants who attended in person. The Border Program made an extra effort to provide the proceedings via webinar to reduce costs associated with travel and to increase access to participants who

could not travel to San Diego. Participants represented twenty-nine US agencies from county, state, and federal governments; two tribal nations; six Mexican agencies from state and federal governments; and three Canadian agencies. There were also eighteen webinar participants; including two from Mexico and one from Canada. The [presentations have been posted](#) on Region 9 EPA's Border 2020 website.

EPA and [SEMARNAT](#) made commitments to review and follow-up with participants on proposed action items. A summary of the workshop was prepared and circulated, which included a contact list of attendees and a draft of the existing county, state, and federal information and database sources developed as part of the workshop exercises. **Contacts:** [Emily Pimentel](#), 415-972-3326, [Joel Jones](#), 415-972-3449 or [Ivan Lieben](#) at 415-972-3914

Environmental Health

Valley Fever Concerns for the Imperial Valley Environmental Justice and Enforcement (EJ) Task Force

Based on concerns raised at the monthly EJ task force meetings regarding [Valley Fever](#), (a respiratory fungal infection caused by naturally occurring spores found in desert soil), Region 9 Border Staff engaged with several experts and agencies and facilitated bringing Orion McCotter, of the [Arizona Department of Health Services](#) to present a very thorough overview of Valley Fever and answered questions from the EJ Task Force during the June meeting. In addition, Paula Kriner, Epidemiology Division Manager with the [Imperial County Public Health Department](#) sent staff to the meeting to share information on the extensive work Imperial County is doing on the subject. Contact: [Alheli Baños-Keener](#), 619-235-4767

EPA Participates in U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission Drafting Committee

Consistent with Border 2020's commitment to leverage and collaborate with HHS's [U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission](#) (USMBHC) on common goals, on September 23-24, Region 9 Border Staff participated in a bi-national Technical Workgroup to help draft the BHC's Healthy Border 2020 Program, which will guide Border Health efforts for the next eight years. With assistance from the Region 9 EPA Children's Health and the Air Toxics Offices, EPA submitted draft language for their consideration. **Contact:** [Tomas Torres](#), 619-235-4775

EPA Border Program Promotes Children's Environmental Health at Imperial Valley Asthma Forum

Consistent with binational efforts to improve children's environmental



Asthma Forum student participant presents to the judges and audience

health along the border, and in concert with Children's Health Month and Border Binational Health Week, the EPA Border Team participated in the third annual [Stop and Listen Asthma Forum](#) in El Centro, California on October 30. Region 9 Border Staff, in partnership with the [Imperial Valley Child Asthma Program](#) and the [U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission](#), helped plan the event to highlight the severe asthma issues that plague Imperial County and to identify solutions to mutually explore and address. EPA provided opening remarks and listened to presentations by local high school students focused on asthma and the health impacts of border air quality on the community. A panel of judges evaluated the presentations and awarded prizes, which were provided by the [Imperial County Air Pollution Control District](#). Contact: [Alheli Baños-Keener](#), 619-235-4767



Picture from [Imperial Valley Press news article](#) on the event

Border Program Supports 5th Annual Imperial Valley Environmental Health Leadership Summit

Consistent with the Region 9 Federal Regional Council (Border Committee) focus on improving environmental and children's health in the Imperial Valley, Region 9 Border Office staff attended the [Imperial Valley Environmental Health Leadership Summit](#) in El Centro, CA on Saturday November 1st. The Summit focused on air quality health impacts related to the International Ports of Entry, impacts from significant renewable energy development in Imperial Valley, and issues related to the receding Salton Sea shoreline. The keynote speaker was former Region 9 Administrator Felicia Marcus, now Chair of the [State Water Resources Board](#). Arsenio

Mataka, Assistant Secretary for EJ and Tribal Affairs with [Cal/EPA](#) was also on the agenda. Key breakout sessions included: an overview of the renewable energy plan for the Salton Sea, presented by the [Imperial Irrigation District](#); and a Border Air Quality Panel Discussion, including Jenny Quintana, PhD from San Diego State University who recently released a white paper on her research on the [Health Impacts due to traffic at the San Ysidro Port of Entry](#). Contacts: [Dave Fege](#), 619-235-4769 and [Alheli Baños-Keener](#), 619-235-4767

Project Completed: Transitioning to Reduced-Risk Cotton Pest Management Practices in the Mexicali Region

As part of a Border 2012-funded project, the University of [Arizona Pest Management Center](#) (AZPMC) has been working in Mexicali, Baja California to implement reduced-risk approaches to pest management in cotton. AZMPC is using an [IPM](#) (integrated pest management) model that has been successfully deployed throughout Arizona to reduce the amount of broadly toxic pyrethroids, organophosphates, carbamates and endosulfan that are used to produce cotton in this area of the border. The AZPMC has provided technical assistance to Mexican growers on specific pest management issues that they face and obtained data from what is considered one of the largest cotton grower cooperatives of the region. AZPMC is digitizing over 1100 individual field records showing pesticide prescriptions and other field records for that large cooperative. Once the full data set is complete, the goal will be to characterize pest management practices prior to, during, and after educational programming (intervention) there. Registrants in Mexico are also responding by bringing more modern chemistries forward and adjusting pricing to make them more accessible to the northern Mexican cotton market. Contact: [Mary Grisier](#), 415-947-4213