

Border 2012 Summary of Comments

FRONTERA 2012
Asociacion de Agencias Aduanales
Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas
November 13, 2002

Greetings and welcome on behalf of SEMARNAT, the Government of the State of Tamaulipas and EPA.

We want to share with you the Border Environmental Program.

INTRODUCTIONS

José Manuel Suarez Lopez – Mayor, Nuevo Laredo

Lindolfo Duran – Representing the Government for the State of Tamaulipas

Steve Neimeyer - TCEQ

Mario Alberto Vasquez -

Carlos Montiel Faeb – President, Citizens Coordination Board

Ana Philips - EPA

Gina Weber - EPA Region 6

Mayor:

Greetings. We are happy to host this afternoon this public meeting within the Border 2012 Program. All of us who were introduced have to do with the environment and we feel the obligation of making decisions marked as our obligation. We should pay special attention to this environment that we use in a very irresponsible manner and does not belong to us because what we have to account for are facts that are going to be demanded from us.

VIDEO

We have had the opportunity of looking at this video and we want to take advantage of this opportunity to thank the institutions here today.

Alfonso Martinez Muñoz – The video is a summary of the 2012 Program. It is a ten-year program with the close coordination of the Ten States. As we saw in the video, the border area was established in 1983. This 2012 program has a completely different organization because it establishes very clear goals (pg. 14).

Water contamination – Water quality that reaches the Gulf of Mexico is very important. It has been specified that emissions will be reduced; also, the possibility of enforcing standards similar in both countries has been studied, ways in which waste from crops can be used. Objective three establishes the reduction of soil contamination, 50% increase in

the number of companies that voluntarily implement compliance with the law. Objective four talks about exposure to pesticides. There is still a lack of knowledge regarding the frequent use of pesticides. Something that is important is to have a well-coordinated mechanism for emergency planning. This program is different because it presents goals established in time. Page 18 establishes the different regions into which the border was divided. They are four, and the northeast region is the one that corresponds to us.

These forums will also establish priorities; there are also problems that are very different in these zones; priorities outlined for this region. Early next year we will form work groups. That is the presentation of the program, now we will go into the question and answer section of the Program.

Moderator – We will have a five-minute break and then we will have comments. I want to remind you that this is a public hearing. At this moment we open the section for questions and answers. Do any of you have any questions?

Steve Neimeyer – The video that you saw is a summary of the document. The comments will only be received until November 22.

Mario Alberto Vasquez – The goals and objectives are very clear, both countries have made it very clear but I think that something is missing. We only have the proposal to solve environmental issues, but we need indicators. We need to be more objective, there are resources from NADBank but sometimes Mexico cannot reach them.

Another issue, in region one we go back to the pesticide issue, we are talking about farmers, and it is worthless to train people if we do not regulate products. In Mexico we do not have a restrictive process.

These are the two main issues, I am convinced of the contribution, I know Gina and I am aware of the effort. I believe that it is a good feeling and this is something we should celebrate to be able to do something for the communities in which we live on both sides of the border.

Margarita Palafox – We want to make it clear that this document is a draft. You are the ones that experience the problems. The goals included here are feasible but on the other hand we are lacking the indicators that will be made known by the Ten States participating. They are being adapted, derived from the Border XXI programs. Also, measure which are the most adequate ones that can be used; organize regional groups that correspond to this region. The Secretariat of Health is an essential part of this Program and the Border States as well as EPA and SEMARNAT are concerned about the coordination of the agencies.

BREAK

QUESTIONS

Arturo Sanchez – It is important that we consider soil. I do not know if US laws takes this into consideration like ours. I remember that in Wisconsin, which is a lumber state, within their activities to protect flora and fauna, for each pine that they cut they have the obligation of planting ten more.

Juan Raúl - Environmental education and training. Within the study programs for children in elementary and secondary/preparatory (high-school), the Mayor is requesting that we be provided a video that teaches us what environmental protection is about. Reinforced with didactic material to enforce this awareness, I propose continuous training, request courses for teachers to teach children. When we cross the bridge is the only time we do not throw garbage out the window. This is my participation, to request didactic support material and apply it on what the Mayor is proposing.

Rosalio Arroyo – Private Sector – The environmental management systems for environmental audits include everything related to the environment. It should be general; it is only in the federal environment. The State government has two documentaries that are available to the municipality; SEDUE also has a proposal for the municipalities.

Yolanda Lopez Sosa – Very important issues are discussed here. Everything that is important has been discussed and with regards to environmental pollution. Unfortunately I live downtown. In ecology noise is also contamination. I cannot sleep, I have specifically requested assistance. There are people who drink in the streets and nobody has responded to our calls. Its not that I want to take advantage, this is why I am here, to get an answer; I will submit a document that has been processed. I cannot sleep; I am about to have a nervous breakdown.

United States Consul in Nuevo Laredo – I am here to invite you to the Border Mechanism meetings in which we discuss health, trade, bridges, etc., issues. The next meeting will be a good opportunity for us to explain the Border 2012 Program and we have the officers. We have a meeting every six months with local officials; you can ask NADBank if they have projects or if it has to be through you.

Gina Weber – Thank you for your invitation. I wanted to emphasize that these meetings are the beginning of a process. I wanted to go back to the comments and I want to do this on purpose, because what we want is for regional groups to carry this out. That is why there is why there is not too much information in the document. We are not talking about the financing of the Program either, but what we are doing with your help is prioritize. Your question about NADBank, which is linked to BECC, they also have a fund separate from what EPA gives us. We are a link to help them and try to obtain funds, they have their separate funds but we work jointly and they will respond to regional and local issues.

Margarita Palafox – They are considered internal funds from agencies that are part of this Program and once the regional groups have been defined, we will look for financing mechanisms from the States and NADBank and BECC. On the other hand we had a binational meeting on the fifth and sixth and we heard about issues with regards to your

proposals to respond to them, we need to gather your opinions in order to enrich the document.

Steve Neimeyer: There are funds from direct studies; if you want funds you have to go to BECC.

Enrique Lopez – I have a doubt, who will be part of the border work groups? In the case of Nuevo Leon we do not have that instrument.

Alfonso Martinez – People who want to participate in early 2003; if anybody is interested please let us know.

Gina Weber – The comments are to conclude the document but we want to form work groups also. You can submit your comments in writing and e-mail them or fax them or send them by mail, or you can call us.

Sr. Guerra – Downtown was granted the sewage system and it has had problems, when it rains it overflows. I believe that there is no money available, storm water discharges are so saturated that it was decided to create mitigations and they discharge into the storm water. These are two pollution problems, it is not just for one Mayor, and this dates back three or four years.

Unidentified Person – We are taking advantage of this trip for a potable water and wastewater program, in order to find out about the wastewater problems. Undoubtedly, one of the goals is to get rid of the problems. Today we meet; we are working in these mechanisms to join efforts. We want a certification from BECC in order to have access to grants, NADBank's soft credits.

Luis de Leon – Environmental Services Department – There is something to add, my work is in construction. We have been trying to guide the storm water flows. I have lived in Nuevo Laredo for more than thirty years, mixed sewage is managed; the new reserves considers the construction of a uniform channel for development.

Dr. Arnaldo Ramirez – More than 66 indicators have been analyzed that could be measurable at a binational level. With regards to the impact, an analysis was made during that meeting where we have the morbidity and mortality impact. We have all the information, I believe that I heard that in Nuevo Laredo, because of its geographic situation there are diseases, people do not die from that, the visits to the doctor's office is for preventable diseases. Where streets are not paved, cities are working on that to prevent this environmental health problem.

Pablo Gonzalez – Environmental Participative Committee – This meeting goes beyond the established borders. It was usually said that the Rio Grande was dividing us, we had that idea but with time the river has disappeared and now it is said that the river unites us. If we did not have a river we would not be here. We have to see our City as a metropolitan region that unites to Laredo. If we make any type of settlement in an urban

development, we should also think that it would impact both sides of the border. We have reached an understanding, domestic issues have been discussed, and we should include issues from our neighbor Laredo, Texas.

Atilano Ramirez – Service Provider – My comment is that some actions that have to be carried out are not specified. The creation of hazardous waste collection centers. We should implement development plans. My proposal is basically in that area. Thank you.

Alfonso Martinez – We have noticed that hazardous waste management is a problem for disposal as well as transportation.

Ricardo de la Fuente – New generations can be educated with regards to the issues being discussed. Create an awareness for new generations because the environment also affects them.

Chemist Flores – Air monitoring, the goals established here is what we want to do. How can we support a program? In this case Nuevo Laredo and also other cities for air emission.

Margarita Palafox – A contaminating emissions monitoring center will be created in one of the 7 cities. These actions are already being implemented with the authorization of the President and we consider this a concern. A binational program is being carried out to respond to what you have just expressed, the famous Pro-Air. An additional comment for the Architect; SEMARNAT as well as EPA, we are aware that border cities have similar problems. Tomorrow this same type of meeting will take place in Laredo, Texas.

Steve Neimeyer – We have trained many people, we have done it if they ask us why we train them and not Mexico City, its because Austin is closer.

Teachers are focused on following a program and honestly I admire that. New generations are interested in reversing the damage. Our country's participation is a very young participation. It had been proposed as a committee, as an advisory board, install two offices and not be monitored from Mexico City that would strengthen people's participation. We had proposed to IBWC one in Juarez or Tijuana and another one in Nuevo Laredo and that the national offices would interact.

Carlos – Mexican Association of Psychologists in Nuevo Laredo – You are talking about a binational meeting, suggestion: taking into consideration “binational” it should be reciprocal regarding information. Campaigns such as the presidium are made and what I am trying to say is the following, we are asking the community to make proposals and give alternatives to solutions, but I consider important receiving suggestions in which we can work with people. What can we do so that the contamination problem does not grow in our community? I want to believe that programs have been created that provides results; please let us know what I can do according to effective work that has been carried out.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Alfonso Martinez – Keep people interested. We would like to thank the Secretariat and our friends from the State of Texas and all of you. Thank you very much.