

Joint Communiqué
U.S.-Mexico Border Environmental Program (Border 2012)
The 2008 National Coordinators Meeting

The Border 2012 Program is an innovative, results-driven, binational environmental program that addresses the most pressing environmental issues along the border. This Program is a collaboration among the two federal governments, ten Border States, Tribes, Indigenous Communities, local governments, industry, and the public. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Mexico's Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) held the fifth annual National Coordinators meeting of the Border 2012 Environmental Program with our program partners on September 3-4, 2008, in Juarez, Mexico.

As we set out to do last year, we took stock of our accomplishments, identified key actions to complete work in progress, and committed to more aggressive targets in cases where we have achieved our original targets. We present the results of this review in the "U.S.-Mexico Border Environment Program: Border 2012 – A Mid-Course Refinement (2008-2012)" document. This document reflects current and emerging areas of focus and outlines our strategic framework to guide our bi-national efforts on air, water, waste, environmental health, emergency preparedness, and environmental stewardship. We are delighted to reinforce our partnerships and continue our collaboration with the ten Border States, Tribes, local governments, industry, and the public.

The Border 2012 Program continues to address water and sanitation needs along the border through the allocation of resources of the governments of both countries, including those from the Mexican National Water Commission, State and Municipality Governments; as well as, the important allocation of EPA through the Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF), improving the quality of life of communities along the border. More than 4 million people benefit today from improved sanitation and access to drinking water and this number will increase to 7 million people when all on-going projects are completed. In addition, through the U.S. Tribal Border infrastructure program, over 8,100 homes have been provided with safe drinking water, or basic sanitation. Additionally, in 2008, a new sanitary facility was completed in the indigenous communities of San Jose de la Zorra and San Antonio Necua to improve access to clean water and environmentally friendly sanitary facilities.

We also commend the partnerships developed to address binational watershed and public health issues with projects to reduce sediment runoff, develop flood control programs, monitor river and coastal water quality, promote the use of biodiesel, and development of the binational water quality database.

We celebrate the collaboration between EPA and SEMARNAT that has resulted in Mexico implementing the Transporte Limpio, modeled after EPA's SmartWay. This program will be launched in November of this year and will increase fuel efficiency and reduce pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions from diesel trucks operating along the border.

We commend California, Baja California, Arizona, Sonora, and New Mexico, for completing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) inventories following the International Panel on Climate Change protocol. These inventories provide information on sources and volumes of emissions and enable identification of strategies for reducing emissions.

Abandoned scrap tires present environmental and public health hazards from potential fires and their resulting air pollution, and from disease-carrying pests. We commend the clean up of Matamoros, Reynosa, Piedras Negras, and San Luis Rio Colorado tire piles and the on-going cleanup at the Juarez site. Together, all cleanups to date have eliminated over 4 million scrap tires along the border. We also commend the community's engagement in additional scrap tire cleanups in the Palomas and Ascension region.

In October 2006, EPA and SEMARNAT developed the Scrap Tire Integrated Management Initiative to eliminate scrap tire piles and ensure that newly generated scrap tires are managed in an environmentally sound manner. We commend the Governors from the ten Border States for signing a letter of understanding to formally join and support this initiative.

Furthermore, the Torres Martínez Solid Waste Collaborative, comprised of federal, state, and local agencies, has facilitated the closing of 20 of the 27 major dumps on the reservation and has prevented the creation of new dumps.

We acknowledge the establishment of a post-graduate degree program at Mexico's Institute of Public Health in conjunction with the Pan American Health Organization and Indian Health Services. More than 150 professionals have earned post-graduate degrees at the institutes.

We commend the Emergency Preparedness and Response Border wide Workgroup for strengthening its preparedness and response capabilities along the US-Mexico border through the signing of a new U.S.-Mexico Joint Contingency Plan.

We applaud the collaborative effort between EPA, SERMANAT, and PROFEPA to engage Mexico's Civil Protection as a partner to the Workgroup and Joint Response Team.

We also acknowledge the Workgroup's partnership with the Department of Defense's Northern Command (NorthCom) to enhance full scale exercises, training courses, and assistance in equipping Mexico's local/state responders with emergency response equipment. We celebrate the historic commitment signed between the Tohono O'odham Nation, Arizona, and Sonora, which established a tri-national emergency response plan that formally brings tribal nations into the Border 2012 Emergency Preparedness and Sister City Plan program.

We thank the Borderwide Indicators Task Force for enhancing the Program's ability to measure accomplishments and report environmental results. We expect that with their support, we will have comprehensive capability to measure results as we continue to implement the Program.

Key areas of upcoming work will include:

- o Increasing access to drinking water and wastewater infrastructure;
- o Building greenhouse gas (GHG) information capacity and expanding voluntary programs for reduction of GHG emissions;
- o Developing institutional capacity to manage electronic waste and used oil;
- o Piloting projects that reduce exposure to obsolete agricultural pesticides;
- o Conducting binational emergency preparedness training and exercises at sister cities;
- o Utilizing the Toxics Release Inventory and Pollutant Release and Transfer Register tools to collect and report on industry pollutant releases, and to better assist border industry to go above and beyond compliance; and
- o Promote the relationship of actions and efforts from different institutional stakeholders that coexist in the border region, for example the 10 States Environment Work Table.

In the coming year, we look forward to working closely with our border communities, academia, industry, and our local, state, and tribal partners, to achieve our bi-national commitment to the Program's Guiding Principles, and to implement the mid-course refinements to Border 2012. We will be enhancing our communication and coordination with the public and internally, as we've outlined in the revised Border 2012 Operational Guidelines.

We congratulate the Border 2012 participants on the impressive accomplishments that have been achieved to date. We also commit to continuing this innovative, collaborative approach and to achieving the strengthened goals outlined in the Border 2012 Mid-Course Refinement document.

We look forward to seeing you at our next National Coordinators Meeting in 2009 in California.



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National Coordinator for the U.S.



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