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Region 9's United States-Mexico Winter Newsletter

Disclaimer: if you're having trouble with hyperlinks, disconnect your VPN.



Photo caption: Region 9 Tribal, Intergovernmental, and Policy Division (TIPD) Deputy Director Jeremy Bauer speaks on environmental justice and new grant funds at the January 24th California-Baja California Regional Coordinators meeting. Photo credit: USEPA

MESSAGE FROM THE OUTGOING EPA REGION 9 SAN DIEGO BORDER OFFICE DIRECTOR

Warm greetings this cool February.

Our winter newsletter is the first of 2023, and I wish each of you a good year.

New years can bring with them change and opportunities.

For my part, I share with you the bittersweet news that starting this month, I began a new role within EPA Region 9 as the new permanent Deputy Director of the Tribal, Intergovernmental, and Policy Division (TIPD).

My time as Director of the EPA Region 9 San Diego Border Office was brief but memorable.

While I will miss the role, I am grateful to have been able to work so closely with EPA's Border 2025 team and our program partners on both sides of the border for the past 6 months.

While I am moving on to a new position within the Agency, I am pleased my new responsibilities will include a nexus to the Border Program, and I look forward to continuing to be a part of the important work we do.

In this edition of the newsletter, you will find summaries of the fantastic work of our program participants and partners.

There are also exciting updates on both currently open and upcoming grant programs, collectively providing unprecedented levels of resources.

These resources will advance environmental justice and climate justice across the nation and within the border region.

We will continue to share details as they emerge.

Please review, and always feel welcome to reach out if you have questions or would like to discuss.

Thank you for your time and attention, and I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the newsletter.

Jeremy Bauer

*Deputy Director of the Tribal, Intergovernmental, and Policy Division (TIPD)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 9*



SPECIAL FEBRUARY RECOGNITIONS

February is National **Black History Month** in the United States and Canada.

This is an opportunity for us all to celebrate the culture, contributions, and history of African Americans while recognizing the work ahead of us to create a more just nation.

While we acknowledge the past, let us also recognize and celebrate the contributions of African Americans in the present, and work towards a more equitable and just future for all.

Cancer Prevention Month is also observed in February.

As we undertake our work to protect public health and the environment, let us keep in mind opportunities to raise awareness about the importance of cancer prevention, early detection, and reducing the risks of developing cancer.

IMPORTANT RECENT EVENTS



Photo caption: USEPA staff, partners, and community members in Imperial Beach, CA
Photo credit: USEPA

**January 24th Regional Coordinators Meeting, plus
Inaugural In-Person/Virtual (hybrid) Environmental Justice
Community Check-in for the Border Region**

On January 24th, 2023, U.S. EPA, along with federal, state, local, and tribal partners came together for our first hybrid meeting for our [California-Baja California \(CA-BC\) Regional Coordinators Meeting](#).

This was our first CA-BC hybrid event, where we met in-person, plus virtual participation online via Zoom.

This meeting also included our first dedicated Environmental Justice (EJ) community check-in session for the US-MX Border Office.

There were over 130 non-EPA attendees, including public servants, elected officials, community organizations, and community members.

Most people attended virtually, online via Zoom, but many also came in person.



Photo caption: In-person attendees listen to a presentation on the four goals of the US-MX Border Program.

Photo credit: USEPA

USEPA provided updates on our developing [Environmental Justice \(EJ\)](#) programs within the R9 [Tribal, Intergovernmental, and Policy Division \(TIPD\)](#).

USEPA also provided updates on the status of [Border Water Infrastructure Programs \(BWIP\)](#) and the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) / Tratado entre México, Estados Unidos y Canadá (T-MEC).

Leaders of the Task Forces for Border 2025's four goals gave presentations and updates on their work.

- Goal 1 (Air) updates included air monitoring and public participation in Tijuana, plus industrial regulation, binational cooperation, and inspection/enforcement.
- Goal 1 updates also included the status of increased community outreach, and the ongoing concern of trash burning.
- Goal 2 (Water) updates included risks of untreated wastewater discharges and efforts to mitigate this issue.
- Goal 3 (Waste) updates included some progress on tire disposals, pilot projects on preventing illegal dumping, and legislative / regulation updates.
- Goal 4 (Emergency Preparedness and Response) updates included the ongoing work to update the US-MX Joint Contingency Plan (JCP), and the need to begin updating sister city contingency plans.



Photo caption: CalEPA and other binational partners report on progress
Photo Credit: USEPA

USEPA's binational partners also reported out on progress on their various projects.

Attendees heard presentations from Sharon Macías, Deputy Director for International Strategy and Policy, with Mexico's cabinet-level Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources / [Secretaria del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales \(SEMARNAT\)](#).

They also heard from Monica Vega, Secretary, with Baja California's Secretary for Environment and Sustainable Development / [Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible \(SMADS\)](#).

Shereen D'Souza, Deputy Secretary for [Climate Policy and Intergovernmental Relations with CalEPA](#) discussed climate change initiatives and California state-level ideas.

Salvador Lopez of the [North American Development Bank](#) / Banco de Desarrollo de América del Norte (NADB) also presented on their projects' progress.

All agencies present took time for questions, answers, and sharing contact information.

The day concluded with an evening dedicated to environmental justice and climate justice.

Our Director, Laura Ebbert, and Deputy Director, Jeremy Bauer, both spoke on USEPA's commitment to, and new funding for, climate justice.

Our Environmental Justice Coordinator for the border region, Jessica Helgesen, led a community check-in to hear concerns and questions.

For additional details and copies of agendas and available slides, please visit the [event page on our calendar](#), or email Timothy Irvine at Irvine.Timothy@EPA.gov.

We plan to follow up with attendees soon, to address any questions that we did not answer at the meeting.





Photo caption: A near-black-and-white image of a car, parked in front of a brick building, with a bright green tree.
Photo credit: USEPA

EPA Region 9's Environmental Justice Listening Sessions and Public Comments

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9 hosted four listening sessions on Zoom.

These sessions discussed the Region's draft Fiscal Year 2023 Environmental Justice and Civil Rights Implementation Plan.

Each session included opening remarks from either Regional Administrator Martha Guzman or her Chief of Staff, Sarah Sharpe, including an overview of the Region's priorities and an invitation to the public to provide input.

Members of the public were invited to join any of the four sessions, three of which had geographic focuses.

Spanish language interpretation was provided.

View EPA R9's website for environmental justice, which has the plan in both English and Spanish:

- › <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-your-community#region9>

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

Environmental Justice (EJ) Community Check-in for the Arizona Border Region

In coordination with Tohono O'odham Nation, USEPA plans to host a hybrid ***Climate Justice Community Check-in*** on Wednesday, March 15th.

This session will include updates and dialogue on new funding opportunities that can help support communities in the border region address the environmental and health challenges they face.

If you plan to attend, either in-person or on-line, [please click here to register](#).

Objectives for the Community Check-in include:

- **Hear directly** from communities about issues they're facing
- **Learn about** communities' priorities
- **Be available** to look into questions or concerns raised
- **Relay information** to appropriate EPA experts
- **Share EJ updates** with communities as applicable
- **Provide community members** with opportunities to connect with others working on similar issues

For more information on this event, please contact Lorena Lopez-Powers at lopez-powers.lorena@epa.gov or Jessica Helgesen at Helgesen.jessica@epa.gov.

Financial Assistance Grants Opportunities

[President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act](#) provide unprecedented funding for [EPA's Environmental Justice \(EJ\) programs](#).

New grants funding allows us to provide more support to nonprofit Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and government agencies working on environmental justice issues.

Overall, nationwide, EPA is receiving **\$3 billion** to support environmental justice.

That includes \$2.8 billion in grants for benefitting underserved communities, and \$200 million in technical assistance.

Make sure you're registered and your information is updated on www.grants.gov to be able to apply for federal funds.

Click the following links to learn more:

- › <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101.html>
- › <https://grantsgovprod.wordpress.com/2022/06/03/how-to-add-a-new-organization-profile-on-grants-gov-2/>

For more information on this, please contact CJ Mishima at Mishima.Christopher@EPA.gov.

Two Open Requests for Applications (RFA) for EJ Work

Right now, EPA currently has two Requests for Applications open.

Please see below for more details on these two different grant opportunities.

[EJ Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreements \(EJ CPS\)](#) provide direct funding to CBOs to support projects addressing disproportionate environmental and public health issues.

In total, nationwide, approximately \$30 million is available to support about 80 awards.

Each award is expected to range from \$150,000 - \$500,000.

[EJ Government-to-Government Cooperative Agreements \(EJ G2G\)](#) support government entities working in partnership with communities and other stakeholders to identify and address EJ issues.

Each award is expected to be about \$1 million. In total, nationwide, approximately \$70 million is available to support about 70 projects.

[The deadline to submit applications for both the CPS and G2G opportunities is April 10, 2023.](#)

You can find more information on these programs, including the RFAs and pre-application assistance webinars, at EPA's EJ Grants Program Website:

- › <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-collaborative-problem-solving-cooperative-agreement-5>
- › <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-government-government-program>

For more information on this, please contact CJ Mishima at Mishima.Christopher@EPA.gov.

Upcoming Environmental and Climate Justice funding

We are excited to provide additional details and opportunities to provide input to EPA on an upcoming grant opportunity to fund nonprofit Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to support a wide range of climate and environmental justice activities, including activities in the border region.

On January 24, we convened a community check-in and dialogue on the Environmental and Climate Justice (ECJ) program funded by [President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act \(IRA\)](#).

[On February 9, 2023](#), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a Request for Information (RFI) seeking input on this program.

This program provides EPA with approximately \$2.8 billion for ECJ program grants and technical assistance.

This RFI seeks public input on new and innovative strategies and approaches for competition design, community engagement, equitable distribution of financial resources, grantee eligibility for funding, capacity-building and outreach, and technical assistance.

EPA's Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights is seeking public input on multiple aspects of the ECJ Program including, but not limited to:

- › ECJ Program Design
- › Types of Projects to Fund
- › Reducing Application Barriers
- › Reporting and Oversight
- › Technical Assistance

[The deadline to provide input is March 17, 2023.](#)

[To view and respond to the Request for Information, please visit: <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/EPA-HQ-OEJECR-2023-0023>](#)

EPA is planning to issue a Notice of Funding Opportunity for approximately \$2 billion of ECJ Program grants in the Summer of 2023 after public input from this RFI has been considered.

For more information on the Inflation Reduction Act:
<https://www.epa.gov/inflation-reduction-act>



Upcoming New Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers (TCTACs)

EPA is in the process of evaluating applications to establish [EJ Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers \(EJ TCTACs\)](#).

EJ TCTACs will provide technical assistance, training, and capacity-building support to communities with environmental justice concerns and their partners.

Approximately \$100 million in total, nationwide, is available for this program.

EPA expects to fund 10 Regional TCTACs (one for each EPA region) and one national TCTAC.

We anticipate that we will start evaluating and deciding on selections in March.

Our goal is to have all TCTAC awards made by early summer 2023.

TCTAC operations are anticipated to begin in Summer of 2023, or soon after.

Please use the links below to learn more about EPA's new TCTACs.

<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-grants-funding-and-technical-assistance>

For more information on this, please contact CJ Mishima at Mishima.Christopher@EPA.gov.


AIR UPDATES




Photo Caption: Panel on governmental perspective of the binational Imperial-Mexicali Air Quality Task Force.
Photo credit: USEPA

Imperial-Mexicali Binational Summit

The Imperial-Mexicali Air Quality Task Force held a two-day summit to discuss air quality in the binational airshed last Fall, on September 27th and 28th in the City of Mexicali.

The summit included panel discussions by government officials, researchers, community groups, media outlets and industry sharing their perspectives on air quality in the region.

The event was the first of its kind for Region 9, and ended with a tour of various sites in Mexicali that are of concern due to their impacts to the local environment.

Recordings of the panel discussions are available through the [Imperial County Air Pollution Control District's Facebook site](#).

**Now in Spanish: Best Practices for Reducing Near-Road
Pollution Exposure at Schools**

EPA recently released the Spanish translation of "[Best Practices for Reducing Near-Road Pollution Exposure at Schools](#)".

This can help Spanish-speaking school communities identify strategies for reducing traffic-related pollution exposure.

This should help new and existing schools that are:

- › located downwind from heavily traveled roadways (such as highways),
- › along corridors with significant trucking traffic, or
- › near other traffic or vehicular pollution sources.

This is an update to an older version from 2015, and new sections were added.

It now includes air quality monitoring with sensors, due to the rapid increase in use and interest on this topic.

WATER UPDATES



Photo caption: Arizona-Sonora Task Force Meeting in Nogales, AZ
Photo credit: USEPA

Arizona/Sonora Water Quality Task Force

The Arizona/Sonora Water Task Force held a meeting on October 6th of 2022 in Nogales, Arizona.

The event was led by the Sonora State Water Commission (CEA), the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), and Region 9 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The event included presentations on Border 2025-funded projects on pretreatment of wastewater with heavy metals in Nogales, Sonora.

It also included binational trainings for sediment pollution retention. Sessions on public policy and stakeholder engagement for green infrastructure and restoration were also held.



Photo caption: Construction progress for Tijuana Oriente Collector Rehabilitation Project
Photo credit: North American Development Bank (NADB)

California-Baja California (CA-BC) Border Water Infrastructure Program (BWIP) Highlights

The Tijuana Oriente Collector Rehabilitation Project is nearing completion through funding support from the Border Water Infrastructure Program (BWIP).

The projected completion date for the project is February 2023.

This project includes installing 1,346 meters of pipeline.

It is expected to mitigate the risk of 7.1 million gallons per day (MGD) of untreated wastewater discharges into the Tijuana River.



Photo Caption: Workshop participants posing in front of gabion they constructed
Photo credit: Borderlands Restoration Network

Border 2025 Goal 2 Project Highlight

Through a grant from EPA's Border 2025 program, the [Borderlands Restoration Network](#) completed a series of binational sediment retention training workshops in Rancho Nuevo, Sonora, Mexico and Patagonia, Arizona.

Restoration practitioners and students representing three tribal nations participated in the trainings and constructed sediment-retaining gabion structures which reduce downstream sediment pollution.

Educational videos were produced through financial support from the same grant to explain construction techniques.

[Click here for the Spanish video](#) and [Click here for the English video](#).



WASTE UPDATES





25.11.2022 SEPARACIÓN, LIMPIEZA Y PESADO DE RESIDUOS

Photo caption: Separation, cleaning, and weighing recyclables in San Antonio Nécua, Mexico
Photo credit: INPACVI

Border 2025-funded Circular Economy Project in Ensenada Launches Operation

Our Border 2025 grantee [Institute for Environmental Planning and Quality of Life \(INPACVI\)](#) has completed a year-long project.

INPACVI built and launched a recycling and composting center, unfinished since 2012, that is now in operation.

The project is based in San Antonio Nécua, Ensenada, home of the 250-strong Kumiai tribal community.

Their project began on December 1st, 2021 and ended on December 31st, 2022, with a goal of strengthening the residential community's capacity for sustainably managing solid waste.

This was achieved through creating an Integral Center for Solid Waste Management and Beneficial Reuse (CIMA).

In September 2022, INPACVI opened CIMA's doors to incoming recyclables.

Three months later, with 40 families and 25 schools and soup kitchens participating, they had collected 1,713 pounds of plastics, glass, cardboard, and aluminum cans.



25.11.2022 ACOPIO DE RESIDUOS

Photo caption: Waste collection station in San Antonio Nécua.
Photo credit: INPACVI

The project is an important component of the [Border 2025 Goal 3 Action Plan](#).

It included training, two technicians to operate CIMA, and sustainable materials management training for local associations.

INPACVI oversaw construction of the center, which includes sites for composting and separation of recyclables.

The project yielded less than expected outcomes from composting, because the Kumiai use organic waste as animal feed.

That practice is in accordance with EPA's [Food Recovery Hierarchy](#).

To keep the project ongoing and viable, INPACVI hopes to partner with nearby communities, governments, and businesses that may provide recyclables and organics.



www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder

Our meetings are open to the public, with simultaneous English and Spanish interpretation.

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[North American Development Bank](#) | [Banco de Desarrollo de América del Norte](#)

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