



**Good Neighbor Environmental Board Hybrid Public Meeting
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 Border Office, El Paso, Texas
and Microsoft Teams Virtual Platform
September 4–5, 2024; 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. MDT**

MEETING SUMMARY

SEPTEMBER 4, 2024

Welcome and Member Roll Call

Eugene Green, Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB) Designated Federal Officer, Federal Advisory Committee Management and Oversight Division (FACMOD), Office of Inclusive Excellence (OIE), Office of Mission Support (OMS), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Robbie Young-Mackall, Director, FACMOD, OIE, OMS, EPA; Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB; Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB; and David Stout, County Commissioner for Precinct 2, El Paso County, Texas

Mr. Eugene Green welcomed the participants, and Ms. Larissa Williams of FACMOD conducted the roll call. A list of meeting participants is included as Appendix A. The meeting agenda is included as Appendix B. The official certification of the minutes by the Chair is included as Appendix C.

Ms. Robbie Young-Mackall last addressed the Board during its May meeting, when the Board discussed establishing working groups to answer the charge questions. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the findings of the working groups. She thanked Dr. Carlos Rincón and Region 6 staff for their hospitality, FACMOD staff for their efforts in supporting this meeting, and the Board members for their time and dedication.

Dr. Kimberly Collins expressed her appreciation for the Board members' time; she is eager to help change the narrative around the U.S.–Mexico border. Dr. Irasema Coronado added her thanks to the Board members for their dedication to GNEB and ensuring that the Board's job is accomplished. GNEB and its members have worked a long time to realize positive changes in the border area.

David Stout welcomed the attendees to El Paso, Texas, and provided a brief overview of the infrastructure within El Paso County Precinct 2, noting that GNEB's work is very important to the precinct. He thanked the Board and EPA for meeting in El Paso.

Overview of Agenda and Meeting Goals/Objectives

Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB, and Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB

Dr. Collins provided an overview of the agenda and meeting goals, which are to discuss and edit the first draft of Comment Letter #1 and begin work on Comment Letter #2. It is important that the Board members use their expertise and include examples from their regions in the comment letters.

GNEB: A Retrospective Examination of the Board's Work

Stephen Mumme, GNEB Member

Dr. Stephen Mumme explained that he began an academic examination of GNEB's recommendations and their effects on the border because he thought that it would be interesting and no examination existed. GNEB has a broad mandate to offer actionable advice on border environmental concerns, which is a monumental task. The Board's broad vision for sustainable development in the border region is implemented by multiple agencies and organizations, which makes it difficult to assess the impacts of the

recommendations. Dr. Mumme examined water sector recommendations, a major focus of GNEB policy, to assess impacts since 1995.

The 1991 Integrated Border Environmental Plan (IBEP) and GNEB's first report (1995) recommend prioritizing the water sector. GNEB included specific recommendations to prioritize potable water and sanitation projects and to advance a binational strategy for protecting transboundary water sources. The Board's second (1997) and third (1998) reports recommend that the U.S. and Mexico federal governments study shared groundwater basins—seeking agreements as necessary—and develop a binational strategy for groundwater and surface water conservation. The Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) and North American Development Bank (NADBank) prioritized water projects by 1999 and created the Border Environment Infrastructure Fund. BECC also began considering water conservation in project certification; however, states did not increase prioritization of border water projects, and no binational movement had been made on groundwater or adoption of an ecosystem approach. It is difficult to know how or to what extent GNEB's recommendations were influential.

Beginning in 2000, the Board increased its focus on water and began to embrace a watershed approach to transboundary water management and project development. Standout actions and achievements from 2000 to 2009 included support for BECC and NADBank water and sanitation projects, congressional enactment of the U.S.–Mexico Transboundary Aquifer Assessment Act, and implementation of specific projects addressing various water needs in the border region.

In 2010, based on its experience with the water sector, GNEB pivoted to more specific recommendations, including discussions about explicit water and sanitation projects. The Board's 15th report, in 2012, was the most comprehensive to date in addressing water issues and acknowledged unfulfilled recommendations from 2005, as well as gains in the water sector. The report's themes of increasing coordination and collaboration, reducing discharge into border water bodies, improving drinking and wastewater infrastructure, and addressing financial needs included 18 detailed recommendations within the water sector. The Board's 16th (2014), 17th (2016), 18th (2017) and 19th (2019) reports also touch on water in some aspect.

GNEB's key roles—describing border conditions, legitimizing beneficial government efforts, highlighting and advocating for best practices, advancing policy integration and partnerships to increase efficiency, and advancing bilateral cooperative mechanisms—are evident in the water sector. The Board's reports are of excellent quality, evidence based and technically vetted by government agency representatives. GNEB's broad recommendations were less successful but important. GNEB advocated for a number of key actions, including watershed approaches, transboundary groundwater management and a comprehensive review of water treaties.

Dr. Teresa Pohlman described U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) cooperation on border environmental issues, noting that a representative from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) used to sit on GNEB. DHS and CBP require U.S. Border Patrol and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to take environmental stewardship very seriously. These agencies spend significant funds on environmental projects and sustainability. DHS is required to follow executive orders (e.g., those on climate change) and, as such, has issued policies, guidance, operational sustainability plans and resilience plans and performs annual program management reviews with specific metrics to ensure that its organizations comply with environmental requirements. In her 18 years at DHS, Dr. Pohlman has seen a shift to being more respectful of the environment, particularly by younger agents.

In response to a question from Mr. Rafael DeLeon about whether he had examined the previous 20 years of NADBank's water projects along the U.S.–Mexico border, Dr. Mumme responded that he had and that NADBank has done well in funding these types of projects, despite limited funds. It is important to recognize the binational aspect of border affairs.

Ms. Pamela Giblin noted that advocacy must be part of the strategy to publicize and “sell” the Board’s reports. Dr. Christopher Brown commented that Board members are not allowed to lobby, but from 2006 to 2010, GNEB members met in Washington, D.C., and provided information to congressional staffers. Board members should widely and diplomatically share information about the comment letters while respecting the fine line between advocacy and lobbying. Dr. Josiah Heyman added that the Board created a brief summary of its 20th report to increase exposure to the full report.

Dr. Pohlman commented that GNEB can brief U.S. Department of State leadership and members of Congress because this act is considered information exchange. The report is sent directly to the U.S. President and Congress, so the Board could develop a 15-minute “elevator speech” to brief these recipients, as well as State Department leadership. She has been disappointed in the lack of communication about GNEB’s report across federal agencies. Dr. Joaquin Murrieta-Saldivar added that it is important for GNEB to support and perform outreach to local governments and nonprofit organizations, many of which are implementing strategies in response to Board recommendations. Dr. Jeffrey Payne noted the disconnect between delivering a report and persuading federal, state and local agencies to respond to the Board’s recommendations and implement strategies. In his time on the Board, GNEB has provided in-person briefings to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) twice, the State Department once, and Congress once. He recommended that the Board develop a plan to not only activate interest in its message but also encourage agencies to partner to address the issues. Partnering is a complex undertaking because policies and budget schedules must align, but without such an effort, it will continue to be difficult to assess GNEB’s impact. Mr. Brent Range commented that the Board must consider its audience, as well as work with the appropriate staff within each agency (e.g., legislative affairs program staff) who can use their contacts to make effective connections. Agencies must be invested to buy in.

Dr. Collins reminded the members that an Outreach Working Group has been established to publicize the report. The group has met once, and GNEB members interested in serving may still join. When Comment Letter #1 has been finalized, members should publicize the letter throughout their networks. State agencies are another resource.

Dr. Mumme commented that the Office of Mexican Affairs border liaison and International Boundary and Water Commission liaison within the Office of Mexican Affairs must be informed about GNEB’s activities. Ms. Giblin suggested sending the report to the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, who is very familiar with U.S.–Mexico border issues. Dr. Jagdish Khubchandani suggested that GNEB broadcast the reports through a press release and EPA listservs and social media. Dr. Pohlman agreed, noting that GNEB has issued press releases in the past.

Dr. Coronado recommended that the State Department participate on the Board. Dr. Collins responded that FACMOD is working on securing a State Department representative.

Overview and Current Activities of the EPA Region 6 Border Office

Carlos Rincón, Director, Region 6 Border Office, EPA

Dr. Rincón explained that Mexico’s next Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, Alicia Bárcena, also served as the Undersecretary of Ecology in the Ministry of Urban Development and Ecology during the signing of the La Paz Agreement. The Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources is Mexico’s counterpart to the EPA Administrator.

The La Paz Agreement defined the U.S.–Mexico border region, and this defined area provides the framework under which border programs operate. The current Border 2025 Program is the latest environmental program implemented under the agreement, building on IBEP and the Border XXI, Border 2012 and Border 2020 environmental programs. Border 2025 has been streamlined and now has a 5-year horizon instead of 8 years, four goals instead of five, and a simplified structure in which regional coordinators have replaced workgroups. Goal 2 is to improve water quality, with 21 of 78 total projects in Region 6 supported under this goal.

The Border 2025 framework includes 39 objectives and subobjectives, including preventing and reducing pollution in the marine environment and improving public outreach during emergencies. The framework's 12 guiding principles are crosscutting. Dr. Rincón displayed a chart highlighting Border 2025's revised organizational structure, noting that each region has a task force dedicated to each goal, and task forces can be added as needed. Tribes are represented on the executive workgroup to ensure full tribal participation and improve program results. The Border 2025 National Coordinators Meeting will be held September 10–11; the four policy (goal) workgroups will meet, and discussions will begin on the program's successor framework.

Dr. Collins hopes that the task forces are funded enough to perform their work, which has not always been the case. From an equity perspective, the border region needs increased funding compared with other regions. Dr. Rincón responded that regional budgets have decreased significantly.

GNEB Working Group Report Out and Discussion on Charge Topics

Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB; Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB; and GNEB Working Group Members

Dr. Collins provided an overview of the current work plan, topics and timeline for the four comment letters and final report, which will comprise an introduction, the letters and a conclusion. Dr. Collins encouraged GNEB members to contact her with any suggestions for improving the workplan, which should be considered a dynamic document. She noted that the budget is not able to support the translation of each letter, but the Board will develop PowerPoint presentations and outreach materials that the Translation Working Group can translate. The final report will be translated by EPA's translation services.

Review and Discuss Comment Letter #1

GNEB Members

Dr. Collins provided an overview of the letter's organization and topics, including the varied drinking water challenges in diverse border communities, water-harvesting technologies, selection of a pilot project, opportunities, recommendations and references. She noted that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and Drs. Brown and Mumme wrote much of the letter. The two main challenges to be addressed in the letter are the innovative technologies that it discusses and the regulatory environment of public water systems (e.g., Safe Drinking Water Act [SDWA]).

Mr. Eddie Moderow explained that TCEQ worked with its Office of Water and Public Water System Supervision Program to help develop the letter. He considers the SOURCE® pilot project with a scalable solution exciting. The American College of Environmental Lawyers (ACOEL) can help with the permitting aspect. A GNEB member noted that the regulatory frameworks differ among border states, and California's regulations may pose challenges.

Ms. Giblin commented that ACOEL has undertaken the pilot project *pro bono*. A lawyer from Mexico City is exploring the legal issues associated with cross-border implementation of public water systems and investigating legal aspects (e.g., ownership) of the novel desiccation units, also *pro bono*. The private sector may provide grants to establish these technologies if companies have a stake in the region.

Ms. Melisa Gonzalez-Roses commented that the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council is working with an investor on a condensation project for citrus farmers. The project should kick off within the next 6 months.

A GNEB member explained that the letter describes three technologies of increasing complexity and expense, as well as scientific references that document the validity of the technologies.

Mr. Alejandro Barcenas is concerned that the letters address similar issues (e.g., aging infrastructure, limited financial resources) that apply all along the border, but only one region is highlighted in each

letter. Dr. Collins responded that the letters must be less than 10 pages, and highlighting a specific example from one region helps reduce the length of each letter. Each region is represented among the four letters.

GNEB members discussed the audience, which includes local communities, CEQ and the Board members' networks. Dr. Collins reiterated that community involvement is needed during the writing phase to obtain feedback and during the communication phase to ensure broad dissemination. Ms. Kathryn Becker added that the creation of subgroups to focus on translation, outreach and tribes is helpful for communicating the letters.

Mr. Barcenas reiterated his concerns about representing the entire border region. Ms. Giblin noted that the replicability of each pilot project will be highlighted; if a pilot works in one region along the border, others can explore how to use the technology in their communities. Ms. Becker added that the letters are organized by community size (e.g., urban, rural, *colonias*) and solutions for solving the water supply puzzle through off-grid solutions, which she had previously only considered for energy. The Board should introduce the concept of rainwater harvesting modeling. A GNEB member suggested also including water reuse, a new technology not currently being considered by state regulatory agencies. New technologies could encounter regulatory challenges related to delivery if they serve enough people to qualify as a public water system under EPA's definition.

Dr. Murrieta-Saldivar explained that with the support of NADBank, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and others, Watershed Management Group installed active and passive water harvesting systems in the Arizona–Sonora region. Ms. Giblin added that the technology is being used in Dubai, proving that it works in dry climates. Dr. Pohlman explained that CBP explored using atmospheric drinking water technology, but funding was not available. The technology is being used in Puerto Rico, but operating and maintaining the units has been a challenge. She noted that the amount of water vapor in the air ranges from trace amounts to 4 percent, and warm air can hold more water than cold air.

Dr. Collins suggested restructuring the letter so that it highlights the innovation; GNEB is using scientific resources to identify and propose new technologies that can assist with equity efforts in the border region. The letter also can highlight why achieving equity in the border region has been and will always be challenging but how the continued rollout of new, innovative technologies can help achieve equity.

Mr. Barcenas asked whether GNEB is assuming that the traditional methods of obtaining water will not work. Dr. Collins responded that the letter highlights new sources to supplement existing sources, as well as how to meet water demands in remote regions. In response to a comment from Mr. Barcenas, Ms. Giblin noted that wells are drying up, but people with working wells do not need to implement these new technologies.

Dr. Heyman commented that the SOURCE technology is an expensive method of obtaining a small amount of potable water. Communities that do not have water because they are “underbounded” (i.e., jurisdictional issues leave them outside of a water service boundary) cannot afford expensive solutions. GNEB must consider costs. Ms. Gonzalez-Roses noted that maintenance is the largest expense associated with new technologies.

Dr. Murrieta-Saldivar explained that Watershed Management Group is the expert on rainwater harvesting systems and has implemented these systems on both sides of the border. He volunteered to provide information about this affordable technology, which is not new but rather a new way of seeing rainwater as a source of potable water for communities. Tucson, Arizona, has been harvesting rainwater for the last 10 years. Dr. Collins agreed that GNEB might need to broaden its view of new technologies for sourcing water.

Dr. Payne suggested that GNEB consider a recommendation to address technical challenges through a broad range of technologies. One approach could be to frame the discussion around strengthening resilience in the border region, particularly in those areas at acute risk of climate change effects. GNEB

can communicate the range of options for increasing resilience and how they can be implemented and also can recommend that immediate investment is needed to understand the range of approaches that will create continued livability in vulnerable communities.

Ms. Christy Sangster-Begay explained that the San Carlos Apache Tribe received 15 to 20 solar water catchment systems, and the most significant challenge has been maintenance. When units broke within the first year, the tribe could not find local personnel to repair and operate the systems and had to wait 6 to 12 months for the manufacturer to provide service. Workforce development in local communities is needed. Ms. Gonzalez-Roses suggested that GNEB recommend that communities work with local universities to train local personnel. If maintenance and sustainability are not considered, the technologies will not be successful in communities.

Dr. Murrieta-Saldivar commented that rainwater harvesting, air-conditioning condensate and greywater are becoming new sources of water for residential and commercial operations. A holistic hydro-locality approach to managing water is needed.

Ms. Becker asked whether, to make good decisions, communities should first consider technology, cost, or workforce development. She wondered whether GNEB should use a flow chart or columned approach to help communities with their decision-making. Cost is often population driven.

Dr. Yamilett Carrillo Guerrero commented that problems arise when technicians are not available, resulting in the disconnection of the water supply. Because water is a basic human right, some authorities attempt to provide drinking water to *colonias*, but sewage systems are not in place to handle the water. Her perspective is always to consider not only how water can be supplied but also what can be done with water after use (e.g., treatment, recycling).

Mr. Barcenas commented that if a community is given the means to grow, growth will occur, which may create unintended consequences. Mr. Moderow agreed but noted that this should not prevent GNEB from exploring solutions. Dr. Collins added that without solutions, communities will become uninhabitable and residents will move elsewhere, creating stress on other communities. The question is how to make the border more resilient. The idea for the letter came from the projects that ACOEL and TCEQ have been examining, and although the pilot project in this letter does not specifically encompass all regions of the border, the SOURCE technology can be applied all along the border. GNEB must ensure that a broad range of entities read its advice and recommendations to change the conversation around the border and address issues that will only worsen over time. The Board can accomplish this through shorter letters with specific examples.

Dr. Heyman wondered whether water should be provided to sprawling cities along the border. For example, El Paso used to have affordable housing within the city, but people are being pushed to the periphery because costs have doubled. City populations will be limited if residents are not provided with drinking water and sewer services. Dr. Collins stated that GNEB can recognize this as a consequence, but the Board is developing this letter because investment is needed now so that multiple options are available to address emergencies and expanding communities. The technologies may not be “ready for prime time,” but that should not stop GNEB and others from exploring solutions. The Board’s final report can accommodate any changes that occur during the next year. Dr. Carrillo Guerrero added that the pilot projects will highlight maintenance and scalability needs, as well as limits to scalability, so she sees the value in GNEB’s letter. Mr. Range commented that it is a good idea to have potential solutions in place for when they are needed. Ms. Giblin added that Mexico City is facing severe water shortages, and the ACOEL lawyer from Mexico City who is performing the *pro bono* work is very excited about this technology as a potential solution.

Dr. Brown noted that depending on how the Board presents the pilot, GNEB may be seen as suggesting an expensive technology that needs costly maintenance. The Board should streamline the problemscape portion of the letter and package the pilot as a means to identify issues and ask specific research questions

that must be answered when new technologies are implemented. Dr. Trent Biggs agreed and suggested highlighting the atmospheric water harvesting pilot as one of a portfolio of potential solutions for rural household water supply. He is concerned that the Board may appear to be endorsing a particular technology or solution. In practice, supply augmentation often does not solve water problems, especially in large urban areas, and rural–urban transfers may be more cost effective. The pilot could be couched in terms of testing the opportunities and barriers for alternative technologies by addressing critical research questions about the cost and feasibility of the harvesting system.

Ms. Gonzalez-Roses commented that GNEB also must consider water in terms of economic development because new businesses are being developed in rural areas. The Board could work with councils of governments to ensure that its recommendations are included in regional economic development strategies.

Public Comment Period

Dr. Collins called for public comments. Mr. Luis “Sito” Negron summarized a letter submitted by Commissioner Stout’s office; the full text is included as Appendix D. El Paso’s two key issues are transportation and emergency response. Commissioner Stout requests that the Board use El Paso as a transportation case study. As a result of landmark legislation, two major projects are underway in El Paso—a \$700 million project to renovate the Bridge of the Americas Land Port of Entry and a state-recommended project to expand Interstate 10 (I-10) through downtown that El Paso residents do not support. El Paso needs help elevating these issues to the federal level and would like GNEB to develop a letter on these topics in 2025. The transportation sector is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gases and negatively affects local communities. In terms of emergency response, the migrant crisis is a public safety crisis that requires civil response capacity.

Mr. Green noted that he had received three public requests to attend the meeting; none of these individuals were present during the public comment period.

Exploring New Water Technology Applications

Renata Manning-Gbogbo, Director of Technical Services and Grants, NADBank

Ms. Renata Manning-Gbogbo explained that NADBank’s mandate is to support sustainable infrastructure to, among other things, improve the drinking water supply within the U.S.–Mexico border region. In the water sector, drinking water, wastewater, water conservation, and stormwater projects are eligible to receive NADBank funding. Through loans and related financial services, NADBank provides direct financing to public and private entities, and its Green Loan Program lends to financial intermediaries to fund small green projects. NADBank’s grants programs include the Community Assistance Program (CAP) and Border Environment Infrastructure Fund. CAP allows NADBank to deploy funds for innovative technologies and emergency needs; 32 CAP projects have benefited 850,000 border residents through more than 11,000 new or improved water connections, the elimination of 12 million gallons per day of untreated or inadequately wastewater, and other infrastructure improvements.

CAP is being requested to support hydropanel projects, including a project to supply drinking water for five schools in economically distressed neighborhoods in Monterrey, Nuevo León. The hydropanels will be installed in open spaces on school property. The project is intended to supplement drinking water needs only; other water needs are met by the local water utility. During weekends, holidays or other non-school days, area residents may be allowed to use the available water. The anticipated useful life of the panels is 15 years. The panels utilize a material that extracts/absorbs water from ambient humidity, with a daily production rate of 2.5 to 8.2 liters per panel and an expected yield of between 0.13 and 2.0 liters per student. The grant requires implementation of a training plan, establishment of a reserve fund, and submission of quarterly reports describing performance for the first 5 years and annually thereafter.

Ms. Becker asked whether the quarterly reports would be made public. Ms. Manning-Gbogbo found no reason that they would not be. Ms. Becker asked whether NADBank would be able to share the questions

asked during the internal proposal review. Ms. Manning-Gbogbo responded that these could be shared, and the questions and responses are reflected in the project proposals, which are made public.

Dr. Carrillo Guerrero asked whether the school project was required to benefit U.S. communities. Ms. Manning-Gbogbo responded that this requirement applies to EPA funds; NADBank funds are available to entities throughout NADBank's jurisdiction. Dr. Carrillo Guerrero asked whether NADBank followed up with the school directors to ensure that they were in favor of the project. Ms. Manning-Gbogbo replied that the residents of the community, including the school directors, requested this project through a public process.

Ms. Giblin is interested in a checklist that could help organizations, such as ACOEL, set up and perform a successful demonstration project that justifies the use of U.S. funds to benefit both sides of the border. Ms. Manning-Gbogbo offered to help guide ACOEL through the process. She explained that the NADBank projects were required to be adjacent to the border and include a water quality component; the majority of the funding has gone toward wastewater treatment and collection to eliminate discharge to shared water bodies.

Mr. Barcenas has not seen EPA provide maintenance funds for projects; he asked whether such funds are included in NADBank funding. Ms. Manning-Gbogbo responded that NADBank funding is applied to capital infrastructure investment, not maintenance. NADBank promotes project sustainability by requiring grantees to have reserve funds available for repair, replacement, operation and maintenance. NADBank recognizes that this is a challenge in the border region, where many communities do not have debt capacity.

Mr. Marruffo commented that it is necessary to be more strategic in terms of standardizing infrastructure (e.g., same technologies, instruments and equipment among wastewater treatment plants) to make operations and maintenance more effective and efficient so that funds can be applied more effectively.

Dr. Coronado asked whether the water will be tested before being provided to the students. Ms. Manning-Gbogbo responded that the municipality will test the water. The quarterly project reports must include water quality data.

Ms. Becker asked about the types of funding available to farmers. Ms. Manning-Gbogbo responded that individuals are eligible for loans only, and NADBank has strict criteria for each type of loan. The corporate farm that she had mentioned did not require additional water for its expansion plans. Ms. Becker and Ms. Manning-Gbogbo discussed strengthening the relationship between NADBank and the state of New Mexico.

Dr. Mumme asked whether NADBank had been drawn into recent discussions regarding the Rio Grande. Ms. Manning-Gbogbo explained that a \$40 million investment was made in 2003 or 2004 to an irrigation district in the region, but she is unsure whether it was successful.

Mr. Barcenas asked about state agencies' involvement in the approval process for irrigation projects. Ms. Manning-Gbogbo responded that conversations with the state were unnecessary because documentation was in place regarding water rights.

Dr. Murrieta-Saldivar asked how the hydropanels compare to rainwater harvesting in terms of affordability and cost per gallon. Ms. Manning-Gbogbo responded that NADBank did not perform this type of analysis. Dr. Carrillo Guerrero noted that these are very different technologies that work in different environmental conditions.

Recess (Virtual Attendees)/Lunch and Site Visits (In-Person Attendees)

Dr. Coronado recessed the meeting at 1:04 p.m. MDT. The in-person attendees visited sites in the El Paso area relevant to the Board's comment letters.

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Public Comment Period

Dr. Collins called the meeting to order and provided an overview of the day's agenda; Mr. Green called for public comments. As no comments were offered, the in-person attendees used the time to discuss their impressions of the sites that they had visited the previous day.

Review and Discuss Comment Letter #1 (continued)

Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB; Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB; and GNEB Members

Dr. Collins has reconsidered whether Comment Letter #1 should specifically focus on one pilot project; not only are the regulatory aspects extremely challenging, but NADBank is supporting several water sector pilot projects. She would like the letter to discuss innovative technologies. The border region needs access to safe drinking water, and innovative technologies (e.g., water desiccation, rainwater capture) exist that can help communities unable to connect to the current drinking water systems in their areas. The Board could develop a matrix to share high- and low-tech innovations.

A GNEB member agreed with Ms. Becker's comments the day before about creating a decision matrix. He commented that, in addition to innovative technologies, political will is needed to address challenges. Dr. Collins agreed and added that providing a borderwide perspective that highlights local communities—while acknowledging the heterogeneous nature of the border region—is a good approach. Mr. Moderow is excited about the pilot project and believes that GNEB has the capacity to overcome the regulatory challenge. Ms. Giblin noted that solving environmental problems requires three elements (i.e., “three legs of the stool”)—technology/science, law and policy/politics. The law piece is solvable, and the Board has a great deal of expertise in the policy arena. The timeline is not long because it is not necessary to change the law, but rather to communicate and understand what is being asked. Mr. Barcenas suggested that the Board examine the pilot projects to determine how solving legal problems works within the whole package.

Dr. Carrillo Guerrero thinks that the final demonstration will have value. GNEB may need to determine whether it is helpful to define limitations in Texas that SOURCE may encounter or consider the project more generally for border communities.

The Board discussed the availability of Dr. Mumme's book, [*Border Water: The Politics of U.S.–Mexico Transboundary Water Management, 1945–2015*](#); chapters can be downloaded individually on JSTOR.

Ms. Becker has been thinking about GNEB's role in highlighting pilot projects, noting that projects should be located on the U.S. side of the border. The Board should highlight projects and link them to success stories from other organizations (e.g., NADBank, ACOEL) without taking ownership of the projects. Ms. Giblin agreed that GNEB should not endorse a particular product because that falls outside of the Board's scope; she also does not want to mischaracterize ACOEL's role in the pilot project.

Dr. Brown commented that the letter must begin with a good description of the problemscape and reframe the pilot in terms of how to serve remote communities, including barriers and their solutions. The discussion can include rainwater harvesting and desiccation technologies, which currently cannot be scaled. The question becomes: What institutional factors need to be advanced to allow the scaling of desiccation technologies?

Dr. Collins commented that the EPA Office of Water has indicated that these technologies could cause issues under SDWA because they will need to be permitted and approved by the federal government, as well as the states; however, the technology works well for single households. Dr. Mumme commented that the Board's letters will be useful for describing the types of institutional issues on which progress must be made, in addition to describing innovative technologies and case studies. Dr. Collins agreed that the Board must investigate, analyze and identify the specific issues.

Dr. Mumme thought that the binational aspect had been absent from the discussion. He would like the Board to explore binational cooperation on this issue and the potential to implement binational solutions. Dr. Murrieta-Saldivar noted that nature-based solutions also are important.

Ms. Becker thought that the benefit of tracking and reporting how one system implements innovative technologies (i.e., a case study) is to show what is possible. The four communities identified by GNEB have populations and connections that would fall under SDWA jurisdiction. The Board can help a community embark on the process of selecting a technology, navigating financing, and understanding installation and maintenance by showcasing how the process works. Watching a community that has not received funding from NADBank obtain the technology during the course of a year—including how TCEQ and ACOEL provide technical support—would be valuable.

Dr. Biggs agreed with the discussion and suggested that GNEB discuss social and institutional arrangements and governance issues for rural water supply. He provided links to two pertinent papers: [“Trends in Rural Water Supply: Towards a Service Delivery Approach”](#) and [“Small Systems, Big Challenges: Review of Small Drinking Water System Governance.”](#)

Dr. Collins does not want to lose the momentum, knowledge and experience of ACOEL in helping GNEB overcome the law leg of the stool. The regulatory portion is complex and hinders the rollout of new technologies on a greater scale. She explained that Mr. Green has offered to connect the Board with the Office of Water through a virtual meeting because a representative was not able to attend this meeting. Communities do not always accept a top-down approach to implementing new technologies, and the Board also has heard of other concerns (e.g., maintenance, workforce).

Mr. Gilbert Anaya commented that both large and small systems need support in navigating the process. For example, El Paso needed to navigate TCEQ’s permitting process after transitioning to desalination, and a small utility in Sunland Park, New Mexico, grappled with groundwater and arsenic issues. ACOEL can help with these navigation issues. Mr. Barcenas added that Arizona has strong regulations.

Ms. Becker commented that all states have the same guiding regulations under SDWA. GNEB can frame the letter from technical and legal perspectives and identify how new technologies assist in the coverage of remote systems. To keep the letter shorter than 10 pages, the case study can be included as an appendix that grows as the case study grows. Dr. Collins agreed, noting that the perspectives of NADBank, ACOEL, TCEQ and the San Carlos Apache Tribe can be included. Ms. Giblin reiterated that a lawyer in Mexico City is assisting the ACOEL effort *pro bono* to navigate cross-border issues and ensure compliance with Mexican laws. A GNEB member cautioned that regulations are in place for good reasons, so the goal should not be to circumvent them.

Dr. Coronado commented that families are put at risk when wastewater is not disposed of professionally. Safe drinking water alone cannot stop contamination. She reminded the Board that NADBank has not officially signed off on the project and must do its due diligence to ensure the safety of the water. SOURCE, as a for-profit company, should hire lawyers to navigate these issues. Dr. Collins commented that EPA has issued white papers about the SOURCE technology.

Dr. Brown noted that the law is the law; SDWA mandates safe drinking water. Ms. Giblin agreed that laws are non-negotiable, and the question is whether the technology fits within the SDWA definition of a system. Dr. Collins cited a protocol written by EPA in the 1990s that supports state and localities in implementing new, innovative systems. She commented that the letter will not endorse SOURCE or any particular company and will explore nature-based solutions, rainwater harvesting and other potential solutions. She approved of Ms. Becker’s suggestion to assert that these types of activities are being undertaken in the border region because great interest exists. She would like attorneys to provide their opinions on how SDWA and state mandates affect public water systems’ implementation of new technologies.

Dr. Murrieta-Saldivar stated that research is necessary to identify the implications of new technologies. It would be helpful to examine the research being conducted on the environmental impacts of hydropanels (e.g., water quality and quantity, PFAS). Dr. Collins added that a new investment through the Investing in America agenda addresses PFAS in disadvantaged communities, ensuring that environmental justice communities have access to safe water.

Mr. Anaya stated that Dr. Maria Elena Giner had asked him to reiterate to the Board that she would like GNEB to discuss the diversification of the water supply. Reservoirs in the Lower Rio Grande Valley are at a historical all-time low and fall under binational jurisdiction. Any discussion of diversification should include the issue of how to assist affected communities if the Rio Grande is not providing source water for drinking and agriculture.

Dr. Brown reiterated his earlier idea to condense the problemscape at the beginning of the letter and repackage the letter into a research framework that addresses how to provide water to communities and highlights the options, barriers and solutions. Dr. Collins added that the letter will include an appendix that describes current case studies. Dr. Brown would like to begin writing Comment Letter #2 immediately, so Dr. Biggs agreed to help with the reframing of Comment Letter #1. Ms. Becker volunteered to help Dr. Biggs refine Comment Letter #1. Ms. Sangster-Begay can add a paragraph about lessons learned from the San Carlos Apache Tribe's experience. All GNEB members were encouraged to submit their visions for Comment Letter #1.

Brief Introduction to Comment Letter #2

GNEB Working Group Members

Dr. Collins reminded the Board that Comment Letter #2 addresses community resiliency and severe weather in the Paso del Norte region. The writing team includes Dr. Brown, Dr. Khubchandani, Mr. Range, Dr. Payne, Mr. Richard Kirschner, Dr. Heyman, Dr. Biggs, Dr. Rebecca Beavers, Mr. Jonathan Niermann and TCEQ, and Dr. Larisa Ann Ford. Dr. Collins will facilitate.

Overview of Climate Change, Severe Weather and Resilience in the Paso del Norte Region

Christopher Brown, GNEB Member, and Carlos Rincón, Director, Region 6 Border Office, EPA

Dr. Brown provided the context of the discussion, noting that climate challenges are deepening, with major impacts on water resources. The best course of action is to develop resilience to these challenges. The Paso del Norte region includes El Paso; Las Cruces, New Mexico; and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. Two projects in Paso del Norte advance sustainability in Las Cruces and promote climate justice in El Paso. The City of Las Cruces Sustainability Office has ongoing work to equitably approach economic development, social justice and environmental health. The Climate of Las Cruces Study examined historical data and found a clear warming trend since the mid-1990s in terms of precipitation, evapotranspiration and temperature. These trends pose a major health risk to residents, as well as negative environmental and water impacts.

The City of Las Cruces partnered with several agencies to study urban heat islands, producing an [ArcGIS online interactive heatmap](#) and [Heat Watch Report](#). The team found that temperatures on major thoroughfares can reach 140 degrees Fahrenheit. The mapping effort examined the interaction of major traffic corridors, the built environment and land surface temperatures. Dr. Brown showed a number of images highlighting heat predictions and transportation networks. The next steps are to generate urban tree canopy and forestry resources in the areas that will most benefit, plan a sustainable world by exploring the most efficient and environmentally sensitive transportation approaches to the built environment, and examine social vulnerability.

Dr. Rincón explained that the Inflation Reduction Act directs \$5 billion through EPA's Climate Pollution Reduction Grants program to 68 metropolitan statistical areas to develop and implement community-driven efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. With this funding, El Paso has established the Paso del Norte Community Climate Collaborative, which focuses on the urban population in the Chihuahuan

Desert. The phased project will produce a priority climate action plan, comprehensive climate action plan and status reports for accountability. Approximately 70 percent of census tracts in the El Paso metropolitan statistical area are disadvantaged; the region faces clear social and climate justice issues. Phase 1 of the project used community input to identify priority measures of regional resilience and healthy communities. The process resulted in 10 regional projects focused on carbon sequestration, changes to energy generation, active transport and transit, and sustainable land use planning. The focal point of phase 2 is the Paso del Norte Trail, which preserves regional culture, promotes active transportation and economic development, offers educational opportunities, and supports healthy lifestyles in a binational community.

Dr. Rincón summarized the key points of the Las Cruces and El Paso case studies. Focusing on resiliency work to advance climate justice is critical, and viable efforts need local buy-in, knowledge and participation. The role of transport within urban heat islands is clear, and active transportation and robust transit help reduce driving and emissions. Active urban forestry efforts are key to adaptation.

Overview and Discussion of Comment Letter #2

Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB; Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB; and GNEB Members

Dr. Collins reported that Dr. Beavers and the El Paso County Commissioner are interested in the transportation aspect of this letter. Extreme heat is threatening bridges, and border crossings have many bridges. The letter can highlight that these bridges were not built for the temperatures that they are experiencing, with examples that showcase the Texas border section and transportation sector.

Ms. Giblin suggested identifying the various options, including nature-based solutions. Ms. Becker commented that Ten Across, an organization out of Arizona State University, performs phenomenal work in this area and focuses on the I-10 corridor. A recent publication explores extreme heat along this corridor. Climate is a huge topic, and GNEB needs to narrow its focus. Sustainability also is too broad of a topic to undertake, and although resiliency has a clear definition and is a narrower topic, it is still a large topic. GNEB could focus on heat resiliency, including what heat solutions look like, what warming looks like in terms of coping, and how humans adapt to the warming of the border area. Dr. Coronado added that heat increases air conditioning use, which in turn contributes to climate change. Ms. Becker agreed, noting that children no longer play outside because of heat and that social behaviors are changing. Humans make themselves more vulnerable by locking themselves inside with air conditioning.

Dr. Heyman stated that GNEB must clarify whether it will focus on heat only or on extreme weather as a whole, which includes the topic of stormwater, another significant issue for border communities.

Dr. Mumme agreed with the need to clarify the Board's focus because heat is a large topic. A survey found that border residents are concerned about both running out of water and flooding from storms. An informal task force of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration launched a product around short-term heat risks and vulnerable populations. Long-term heat trends are important too. Dr. Mumme highlighted the two views: short-term heat events causing deaths and long-term heat trends causing border cities to become uninhabitable. Dr. Coronado added that short-term events cause long-term health problems, in addition to mortality. Dr. Mumme agreed, noting that short-term heat events do not affect only warm locations; many people died during a heat event in Portland, Oregon.

Mr. Barcenas commented that trees consume a lot of water. His organization spends a great deal of time recommending the types of trees and landscapes to use to conserve water.

Dr. Murrieta-Saldivar cited the importance of the matrix that GNEB had discussed because climate change affects the border region—and the two countries—differently. The two major concerns that he hears about are flooding and heat. Flooding also affects sediment and water quality. Studies prove that no single solution exists; the region needs a holistic approach that addresses how to live in the border region, how climate affects the border way of life, and how border residents can adapt. It is necessary to understand the effects and implications of climate change in the various regions of the border.

Dr. Biggs noted that rural heat (e.g., heat affecting farmworkers) also is critical, and he agrees that flooding is likely another key hazard.

Dr. Carrillo Guerrero asked the Board to consider which focus would have the most value so that the letter will have the most impact. Ms. Becker wondered which unique border aspects lend themselves to finding solutions (e.g., partnerships, better communication). Any discussion of adaptability must include consequences. Dr. Collins added that the shared urban environment is important in this discussion. Lack of action on the Mexico side affects the U.S. side.

Dr. Mumme stressed the need to consider the political, governance and social aspects of the border region. Extreme events raise questions about governance. Population sizes are not unique to the border, but the social and ethnic makeup are, with up to 70 percent of tracts identified as environmental justice communities. Dr. Brown added that the border region is unique because it is a binational, tristate, trimetropolitan region that must act in concert as one region.

Dr. Collins commented that GNEB could explore how climate refugees affect the border region.

Ms. Becker reported that the New Mexico Environment Department is working on a heat illness standard. It is easier to discuss heat versus climate change in New Mexico. If GNEB focuses on urban heat in the border area, the letter can discuss ports of entry, urban confluences and bridges. Bridges are important to the economy, and they should not have to fail to receive attention. Heat could cause ports of entry to close. Dr. Collins agreed that closures are a definite possibility. From a transportation sector perspective, heat domes and atmospheric rivers have serious ramifications. The topic is large, but the Board can describe the case study in which Las Cruces, El Paso and Ciudad Juárez have received initial funds to begin working toward a climate action plan. This is not happening in the San Diego–Tijuana urban area.

Dr. Mumme explained that the U.S. and Mexico sides of the Lower Rio Grande Valley could experience one of the most serious disasters in North American history. The region is a delta shot through with canals, similar to New Orleans, Louisiana. A severe storm in the region could replicate what happened in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. The valley is economically distressed, and a border closure would result in a bottleneck. Hundreds of thousands of dual nationals live in the valley. GNEB can discuss these risks within the framework of infrastructure. A GNEB member agreed with a focus on infrastructure as a way of narrowing the topic. At-risk and environmental justice communities rely on a key infrastructure. Dr. Collins noted that the whole nation relies on infrastructure. Entire manufacturing sectors could shut down as a result of a closure in the border region, which would be exacerbated by near-shoring and other supply chain issues. Mr. Barcenas agreed that border and infrastructure closures would affect all of the United States and into Canada. Dr. Collins added that a study examined the growth and movement of produce through ports of entry and the amount of money that this movement adds to the U.S. economy, as well as how it affects Mexico's economy.

Ms. Becker reiterated the need for a binational emphasis. Comment Letter #1 contains treaty obligations, and Comment Letter #2 can mention trade and trade routes, including their historical connotations. People must re-envision that term and recognize the implications of the heat along modern southern trade routes. GNEB has an apolitical and impersonal perspective. Case studies can describe what federal monies accomplish at the community level, but GNEB should be wary aligning the case study too closely with funds from the current administration. The case study can focus on the Paso del Norte region; the letter can reference a recent American Society of Civil Engineers report on bridges and explore what assessments on infrastructure are being performed to prioritize funding and ensure safety and reliability.

Dr. Ford provided links to helpful resources: [*Department of the Interior Climate Action Plan 2021*](#), [*Department of the Interior Climate Adaptation Plan 2024*](#), and [*The Clean Arizona Plan: Priority Climate Action Plan*](#).

Dr. Biggs suggested including flooding as part of examining infrastructure in a holistic manner. He volunteered to contribute a discussion on rural heat because he has been working in California on this topic, which has different concerns than urban heat.

Ms. Becker thought that the topic of extreme weather is too broad, and the Board should focus on heat. The value of community impact is best notated in an appendix describing how the federal grant process has allowed for community empowerment and development. The letter must focus on infrastructure, which has less of a community piece. Dr. Mumme believed that GNEB could include the community directly in the letter because very vulnerable communities exist around strategic infrastructure. Mobility in crossing the border is important, not only for trade but also personal reasons (e.g., visiting family). The letter can discuss the human community in addition to trade. Ms. Becker agreed. The letter can discuss the resiliency of trade routes in the border region, with a focus on social aspects.

Dr. Collins suggested a focus on the resiliency of border ports of entry to ensure the sustainability of the North American economy. Dr. Carrillo Guerrero noted that this topic would support the inclusion of a case study describing the Smart Border Coalition, which is leading federal governments to open a third port of entry in San Diego. She added that communities support the California mandate that all commercial traffic be electrified by 2035. A GNEB member noted that electric vehicles are heavier than traditional vehicles and will affect bridges. Dr. Collins noted that pavement scientists are determining how roads can handle these heavier vehicles. She added that Dr. Beavers would like to ensure that the transportation sector is not vilified but given strength in the Board's comment letters. A GNEB member noted that bridges are a common denominator among these topics, and any discussion of bridges must include DHS and its field operations.

Dr. Carrillo Guerrero would support a policy recommendation that the U.S. and Mexico governments support organizations like the Smart Border Coalition to rebuild ports of entry so that citizens and local and state agencies can redefine resiliency for each border city. A GNEB member suggested including a recommendation that the La Paz Agreement be used to engage across the U.S.–Mexico border on transportation issues. Dr. Collins stated that a recommendation about the La Paz Agreement leads into the topic of Letter #3, which focuses on the agreement.

Mr. Diego Carlos reiterated that the El Paso County Commissioner is interested in transportation issues and would like GNEB to explore a case study on the Bridge of the Americas Land Port of Entry.

Assignments and Process/Timing for Completing GNEB Comment Letters #1 and #2: Community Stakeholder Engagement

Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB, and Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB

Drs. Collins and Coronado will send information to the Board members to help them revise Comment Letter #1 and develop Comment Letter #2. Members should provide their revisions to Comment Letter #1 by September 11 so that the revised letter can be sent to the Working Group by September 15. The group members will provide their comments by September 19 so that the revised letter can be sent to the full Board by September 23. The communication piece will be sent with the revised letter so that GNEB members can disseminate the letter to their networks to obtain as much feedback as possible. The Board will approve Comment Letter #1 during its November meeting. The final letter will be sent to CEQ, as well as border and state agencies.

Mr. Green explained that the Board generally transmits its letters and reports in December. The GNEB meeting must be held by November 11 to ensure that Comment Letter #1 is transmitted on time.

Ms. Becker asked whether the budget is sufficient to hold four in-person meetings so that the Board can discuss each letter in person. Mr. Green explained that the budget will not support four in-person meetings. GNEB members discussed options for meeting to discuss each letter, including reducing costs by determining locations or external conferences at which the majority of members will be. Mr. Rob Roy

suggested the EPA Region 9 border office in downtown San Diego and a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service border field office.

Action Items/Next Steps and Wrap-Up

Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB, and Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB

Dr. Collins reiterated the timeline and action items identified during the meeting, and Mr. Green provided an update on the Spanish translation of the 20th GNEB report. He has been working with the EPA translation services contractor. Because of the various dialects, differences in how certain terms should be translated have arisen. The contract has ended; after a new contract has been put in place, the contractors will continue their work and use the Board's desired terminology. Dr. Coronado would like a professional version that communities can use; she did not agree with some of the translated terms because they created an accessibility issue. She received pushback from the contractor, who did not want to use her desired terminology. Mr. DeLeon volunteered to work with Mr. Green and the contractors, and Mr. Suarez volunteered to help review the translation.

Adjournment

Dr. Collins and Mr. Green thanked the Board members for their efforts. After noting that borderlanders are special people who need attention and assistance to improve their quality of life, Dr. Collins adjourned the meeting at 12:37 p.m. MDT.

Action Items and Timeline

- Drs. Collins and Coronado will send the Board members information to help them revise Comment Letter #1 and develop Comment Letter #2.
- All GNEB members will send their comments on Comment Letter #1 to Dr. Collins by September 11.
- Dr. Collins will incorporate the Board members' comments and send revised Comment Letter #1 to the Working Group members by September 15.
- The Working Group members will send their comments on the revised Comment Letter #1 to Dr. Collins by September 19.
- Dr. Collins will incorporate the Working Group members' comments and send the updated Comment Letter #1, as well as communication information, to the Board members by September 23.
- All GNEB members will send the updated Comment Letter #1 to their networks for community input and provide these comments to Dr. Collins before the November GNEB virtual meeting.
- The Board will approve Comment Letter #1 during its November virtual meeting.

Appendix A: Meeting Participants

GNEB Chair

Kimberly Collins, Ph.D.

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GNEB Nonfederal, State, Local and Tribal Members

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Carlos Suarez

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**U.S. Department of Commerce—National
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Eugene Green

Designated Federal Officer
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Appendix B: Agenda



Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB) Hybrid Meeting: EPA Region 6 Border Office and Microsoft Teams September 4–5, 2024, 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. MDT

AGENDA

Day 1: September 4, 2024

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9:00–9:20 a.m. | Welcome and Member Roll Call <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eugene Green, GNEB Designated Federal Officer, Federal Advisory Committee Management and Oversight Division (FACMOD)• Robbie Young-Mackall, Director, FACMOD• Dr. Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB• Dr. Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB• David Stout, County Commissioner, El Paso County (Texas) Precinct 2 |
| 9:20–9:30 a.m. | Overview of Agenda and Meeting Goals/Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB• Dr. Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB |
| 9:30–9:50 a.m. | GNEB: A Retrospective Look/Examination of the Board's Work <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Stephen Mumme, GNEB Member |
| 9:50–10:20 a.m. | Overview and Current Activities of the EPA Region 6 Border Office <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Carlos A. Rincón, Director, EPA Region 6 Border Office |
| 10:20–10:50 a.m. | GNEB Working Group Report Out and Discussion on Charge Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB• Dr. Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB• GNEB Working Group Members |
| 10:50–11:00 a.m. | Break |
| 11:00–11:45 a.m. | Review and Discuss Comment Letter #1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• GNEB Members |
| 11:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m. | Public Comment Period |
| 12:00–12:45 p.m. | Exploring New Water Technology Applications <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Renata Manning-Gbogbo, Director of Technical Services and Grants, North American Development Bank |
| 12:45 p.m. | Recess (Virtual Attendees)/Lunch and Site Visits (In-Person Attendees) |

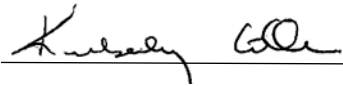
AGENDA (continued)

Day 2: September 5, 2024

- 9:00–9:15 a.m.** Public Comment Period
- 9:15–10:15 a.m.** Review and Discuss Comment Letter #1 (continued)
- Dr. Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB
 - Dr. Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB
 - GNEB Members
- 10:15–10:30 a.m.** Brief Introduction to Comment Letter #2
- GNEB Working Group Meetings
- 10:30–11:00 a.m.** Overview of Climate Change, Severe Weather and Resilience in the Paso del Norte Region
- Dr. Christopher Brown, GNEB Member
 - Dr. Carlos A. Rincón, Director, EPA Region 6 Border Office
- 11:00–11:10 a.m.** Break
- 11:10 a.m.–12:00 p.m.** Overview and Discussion of Comment Letter #2
- Dr. Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB
 - Dr. Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB
 - GNEB Members
- 12:00–12:30 p.m.** Assignments and Process/Timing for Completing GNEB Comment Letters #1 and #2: Community Stakeholder Engagement
- Dr. Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB
 - Dr. Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB
- 12:30–1:00 p.m.** Action Items/Next Steps and Wrap-Up
- Dr. Kimberly Collins, Chair, GNEB
 - Dr. Irasema Coronado, Vice Chair, GNEB
- 1:00 p.m.** Adjournment

Appendix C: Chair Certification of Minutes

I, Kimberly Collins, Chair of the Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB), certify that this is the final version of the complete minutes for the hybrid meeting held September 4–5, 2024, and that the minutes accurately reflect the discussions and decisions of the meeting.



Kimberly Collins, GNEB Chair

October 16, 2024

Date

Appendix D: Written Public Comment



COUNTY OF EL PASO
DAVID C. STOUT
COUNTY COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT TWO

Sept. 5, 2024

Honorable Members
Good Neighbor Environmental Board
c/o Eugene Green

VIA Electronic Mail

Honorable Members of the Good Neighbor Environmental Board:

Thank you for meeting in El Paso. I appreciate the opportunity to address you in person, and to provide supplementary comment and documents regarding an area of inquiry that may be in interest in your work – transportation, and the role of highways, bridges, interchanges, and other facilities that cumulatively can be considered a point source, and the vehicles that use these facilities, which typically are considered mobile sources.

Since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which built upon other treaties with Mexico, many of us have emphasized the urgent need to improve environmental and public health conditions on the border. While there is more to do, we have made progress in addressing issue areas such as air quality and the need for water and sewer service on both sides of the border, including, in the U.S., the previously unregulated developments known as colonias.

Landmark legislation under the Biden administration has introduced new opportunities for economic growth while emphasizing green infrastructure. This shift is crucial as we enter an era of onshoring, which brings with it new pressures, particularly in manufacturing and transportation sectors. All border communities with ports seek to maximize freight movements, which are both local for the manufacturing and warehousing processes and national for bringing goods to interior markets and/or further manufacturing. This brings both opportunities and challenges. For example, increased manufacturing and movements increase both point and mobile sources of air pollution, as well as hazardous cargo movements and use in production.

Balancing public and environmental health with economic development is difficult, but not impossible. However, for that to happen, health must be part of the discussion from the start. For example, in El Paso, the Bridge of the Americas is undergoing a ports renovation. The community has demanded that we take advantage of this moment to remove commercial cargo from the bridge. I am in full agreement.

Further, transportation and industry advocates are working with our regional transportation planner, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, on a regional ports plan. In my opinion, a

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**COUNTY OF EL PASO
DAVID C. STOUT
COUNTY COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT TWO**

major goal of this plan should be to funnel commercial cargo movement away from densely populated urban cores. This separation is vital to mitigate the impact of increased transportation activities on air quality and public health. Another example of a transportation project that I believe warrants a closer look by bodies such as this is the proposed expansion of Interstate 10 through Central and Downtown El Paso. Known as Downtown 10, this would add lanes and frontage roads to a portion of I-10 that is not the most congested in El Paso, and would induce more freight traffic through the heart of the City. A project that would support trade, and move traffic away from the center of the city, is the Northeast bypass, which has been continually delayed for more than 15 years. At least in part, this was because money was taken from the bypass, and supplement the Border West elevated highway, which runs parallel to I-10, including in the same area where the state now seeks to expand I-10.

In this context, our goal as good neighbors and custodians of our binational community's health should be to prioritize the wellbeing of our people. El Paso, being a key junction on the southern border, faces challenges that are similar to those faced by all large, urbanized border communities, and challenges that are unique to us.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the GNEP consider an additional letter on transportation, the key to trade opportunities but also the fastest-growing sector of greenhouse gas emissions, in its upcoming report, using El Paso as a case study. I have attached to this submission, via email, several comment letters my office has submitted on these issues, and my office can provide many more public comments and other resources, including connecting with community groups.

Again, I am grateful for the EPA Good Neighbor Environmental Board's decision to meet in El Paso, for the work you have done, and for the work you are doing to uplift community environmental and public health concerns. Your voice is critical in reaching decision-makers with science- and evidence-based public policy proposals, and I am eager to collaborate with you going forward.

Sincerely,

David C. Stout
County Commissioner
El Paso County, Precinct 2

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