



Border 2020 Newsletter

Region 9

California, Baja California, Arizona and Sonora
Spring/Summer 2015



www2.epa.gov/border2020

This newsletter provides a summary of activities that took place from January to June 2015.

General Updates

New Air Quality Monitor Launched at San Diego-Tijuana Border Crossing: On February 2, 2015, Regional Administrator Blumenfeld spoke at the inauguration of a special-use fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) monitor at the San Ysidro Port of Entry in San Diego. The monitor is located on the roof of the main pedestrian building at the Port of Entry, adjacent to the busiest international land crossing in the world.

Under a grant from EPA, the San Diego Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD) installed the monitor and will operate it for two years to provide a more accurate estimate of PM_{2.5} concentrations in adjacent communities. The PM_{2.5} levels are being monitored in real-time and the data is continuously posted on the [SDAPCD's website](#). Potential sources of PM_{2.5} include emissions from the thousands of northbound vehicles idling at the border each day, and soot from nearby agricultural burning. The installation and operation of the monitor is a partnership between EPA, the SDAPCD, the California Air Resources Board (CARB), the General Services Administration (GSA), and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). See [EPA press release](#). Contact Dave Fege at fege.dave@epa.gov.



U.S.-Mexico Border Program Releases 2015 Request for Proposals (RFP): Region 9's U.S.-Mexico Border Program is reviewing proposals received following a 45-day RFP issued on April 13th. The RFP fulfills binational commitments identified within the U.S.-Mexico Border Environment Program: Border 2020. The RFP put forth 29 priority project areas that support binational environmental protection efforts along the California/Baja California and Arizona/Sonora border region. Approximately \$1.2 million will be made available. For more information on this year's RFP, please visit www.cocef.org or contact Lorena Lopez-Powers at lopez-powers.lorena@epa.gov.

Border 2020 Action Plans Showcase Border Efforts Underway: The Arizona-Sonora and California-Baja California 2013-2014 Action Plans have been published to the [Border 2020 website](#). The Action Plans provide a summary of known projects and efforts that were funded by a variety of border partners in Arizona-Sonora and California-Baja California and that align with the Border 2020 Goals and Objectives. Of the 121 activities described in the 2013-2014 Action Plans, 60 were completed, 7 were cancelled, and 54 are ongoing. Action Plans help align the Border 2020 resources towards accomplishing unmet goals and objectives, inform future 2-year Action Plans, and take into account resource and priority changes. 2015-2016 Action Plans have been developed and will be posted in late-July. Contact Jeremy Bauer at bauer.jeremy@epa.gov.

Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup Leadership and Task Forces Convene: On April 30th, the state and federal agency co-chairs of the Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup convened in Nogales, Sonora with the air, water, and waste Task Forces. A significant portion of the meeting focused on the Border 2020 RFP criteria, completion of the draft 2015-2016 Arizona-Sonora Regional Workgroup Action Plan, and Q&A from border stakeholders. The meeting concluded with a tour of the Los Alisos Wastewater Treatment Plant which boasts a 1.5MW solar array (the first one in Latin America) and whose funding was leveraged by the Border Environment Infrastructure Fund. The meeting was led by Amanda Stone (ADEQ), Tomás Torres (EPA), Oscar Tellez Leyva of Sonora's Commission of Ecology and Sustainable Development (CEDES), and Jorge Andres Suilo Orozco of Mexico's Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT). Contact Lorena Lopez-Powers at lopez-powers.lorena@epa.gov.



BECC/NADB Semiannual Meeting: The Board of Directors of the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) and the North American Development Bank (NADB) convened in Tijuana on May 13-14 for their semiannual public meeting. The Board approved the certification and financing of \$24.87 million for four new infrastructure projects in the U.S.-Mexico border region. Region 9 projects included first-time paving of more than 34,000 square meters of streets, water and wastewater infrastructure, and public lighting system improvements in Playas de Rosarito, Baja California; improvements to a wastewater treatment plant in Wilcox, Arizona benefiting Lake Cochise; and replacement of the Crawford Street water main in Nogales, Arizona. The Board also approved the integration of BECC and NADB into a single institution; however, additional work remains to finalize the charter of the merged institution and organizational structure. It is expected that the new institution will preserve the environmental mission and geographic jurisdiction of the institutions. For more information, see [BECC-NADB Press Release](#).

Goal Updates

Goal 1– Reduce Air Pollution

U.S. and Mexico Develop Strategy on Border Air Quality: On May 27, 2015, Region 9 staff (Zimpfer, Fege, Perez) met with Mexican Federal and State representatives (SEMARNAT, INECC, and SPA) and U.S. state and local representatives (CARB, SDAPCD, ICAPCD) to review the status of current projects and plan future air quality efforts in the California-Baja California regions. Priority topics of discussion included options to improve the operation and maintenance of the Baja Air Quality Monitoring Network which has been intermittently in disrepair; the installation of additional monitoring stations in Mexicali; operation of the new monitor at San Ysidro; training for Baja California staff to be provided by CARB and INECC; and the completion of the Air Border 2020 Action Plan. The meeting was held in Tijuana at the U.S. Consulate.

Goal 2 – Improve Access to Clean and Safe Water

Holtville, California Kicks-off New Wastewater System Improvements: The City of Holtville, California began operating its new gravity wastewater transmission main in February 2015, benefiting 6,500 residents. The old 3.2 mile transmission main was 84 years old and experienced frequent pipe and manhole collapses. Its deteriorated condition also allowed infiltration of agricultural water, significantly increasing flows to the treatment plant. EPA provided \$400,000 in technical assistance to support planning and design of a wastewater improvement project totaling \$1.3 million. These technical assistance funds allowed the City to secure construction funding from USDA-Rural Development (\$2.8 million loan and \$1.6 million grant), and EPA Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) resources (\$1.3 million grant). In June 2014, the City extended service to 29 homes in two small neighborhoods with failed septic systems and substandard wastewater connections discharging to the transmission main. (Su Cox, 415-972-3555)

Willcox, Arizona is Slated for New Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements: The City of Willcox, AZ, is rehabilitating and upgrading its wastewater treatment plant from a lagoon system to an oxidation ditch facility. The improvements will enable the plant to comply with permit limits for discharges to the impaired Cochise Lake. The joint BECC-NADB Board certified the project for construction at the May 14 Board meeting in Tijuana. This \$11.33 million project is jointly funded with \$4.62 million in EPA BEIF funds administered by the NADB, and a USDA-RD loan and grant totaling \$6.71 million. (Roger Kohn, 415-972-3416)

Border 2020 AZ/SON Water Task Force Advances Water Efforts: The Task Force convened in Nogales, Sonora, following the Regional Workgroup Meeting on April 30, 2015. Key topics of discussion included IBWC's design plans for rehabilitating the International Outfall Interceptor (IBWC), the Fats Oils and Grease (FOG) Pretreatment Toolkit (BECC), the Metals and Cyanide Handling workshops (BECC), and the solar project at the Los Alisos Wastewater Treatment Plant (OOMAPAS-NS), which was funded in-part through EPA's Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF). After the meeting, the Director of OOMAPAS gave ADEQ, EPA, and BECC officials a tour of the treatment plant and solar project. (Doug Liden, 619-235-4763)

Border 2020 Tijuana River Watershed Task Force: The Task Force met jointly with the California Regional



Water Quality Control Board-led Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team on June 18th at the Tijuana Estuary Training Center in Imperial Beach, CA. Key topics of discussion included: the EPA RARE-funded Tijuana sediment model development (SDSU), Coastal dye studies funded by NSA (Scripps), Tijuana River Action Month activities (WildCoast), tire cleanup efforts in the Valley (City of SD), bypasses from the Tijuana River (IBWC), Flood Resilient Infrastructure and Sustainable Environments Project (UC Irvine). (Doug Liden, 619-235-4763)

Goal 3 –Promoting Materials and Waste Management and Clean Sites

Addressing Binational Trash in the New River: The Sonoran Institute (SI), working under a \$65,000 Border 2020 grant, has kicked-off efforts to remove trash along a 1.5 km area of the New River canal in Mexicali. In addition, SI will develop designs for an Eco-kiosk to demonstrate the benefits of this project in creating public green space; and will seek community input on the causes of trash dumping and mitigation strategies. SI removed over 2200 tons of trash in the first cleanup on January 24th, involving 11 government agencies and 44



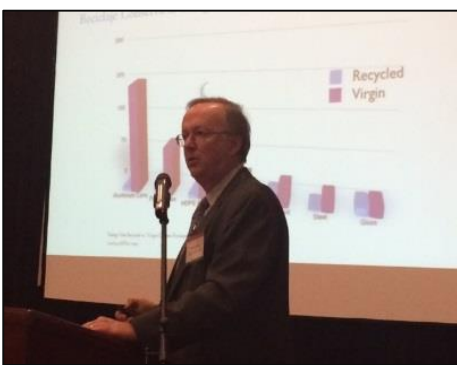
community members. SI conducted several public workshops engaging 14 government agencies and field surveys canvassing various community members of three colonias. To amplify community engagement on the canal cleanups and reuse efforts, SI held an environmental education fair on June 19 and plans to conduct additional cleanups along the canal this summer. Finally, SI has leveraged their grant funds by collaborating with several community organizations for volunteer support, equipment, security, and other services.

The Inter-American Development Bank Invests in Developing e-Waste Management Capacity in Mexicali:

The Inter-American Development Bank is investing over \$460,000 with an additional \$338,000 in matching funds to promote the safe recycling of used electronic devices (e-waste). The project will build capacity on safe recycling practices, conduct e-waste collection events, and identify markets and training needs to transition the informal sector waste pickers (*pepenadores*) into safe, living wage business enterprises in the repair and dismantling of e-waste. The BECC is administering the project over a 42 month period in partnership with EPA, the MIT Co-lab, UABC, and others.



Waste Policy Forum Convenes in Tijuana. On February 10-11, the Border 2020 Waste Policy Co-chairs Barnes Johnson (EPA OSWER) and Carlos Sanchez-Gasca (SEMARNAT) convened in Tijuana, Baja California.



Binational topics of discussion included: sustainable materials management, draft guidance on preparing end-of-life vehicles (junk cars) for export, abandoned tires, discarded electronics, plastics, and trans-boundary trash mitigation. Border 2020 grantees, Fundación Hélice, Tijuana Calidad de Vida, and the Sonoran Institute (all environmental NGOs) gave presentations on the zero waste activities being performed under their grants. Region 9 was represented by Jeff Scott, U.S. Federal Co-chair of the AC/BC and AZ/SON Regional Workgroup. Contact Emily Pimentel at pimentel.emily@epa.gov.

Waste and Enforcement Task Force Convenes in Nogales, Sonora: On April 30th, the state and federal co-chairs of the Waste and Enforcement Task convened to discuss Arizona/Sonora priorities and accomplishments. Key outcomes included binational coordination on trash cleanups in Nogales, Sonora and finalizing the 2015-2016 Action Plan projects and efforts.

New e-waste Tool Helps Arizona Border Communities Reclaim Resources. The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), working under a \$63,621 Border 2020 grant, completed a web-based toolkit to promote the use of certified electronic recyclers to safely manage e-waste and to provide easy-to-implement guidelines to conduct e-waste collection events in border communities. ADEQ held workshops in border communities on how to apply the toolkit and collected over 60,000 lbs. of e-waste using R2 or e-Stewards, certified recyclers in the Arizona border cities of Bisbee, Nogales, Sahuarita, San Luis, and Somerton. ADEQ is also exploring conducting a collection event in Serra Vista, Arizona in the next three months. The toolkit is anticipated to be available on-line in English and Spanish by September 2015. See draft pre-view at <http://azdeq.gov/environ/waste/p2/ewastetoolkit/introduction.html>.

EPA Awards Funding to Remove Binational Trash in the Nogales Wash: During the summer monsoons, the Nogales Wash in Arizona is impacted by solid waste originating in Nogales, Sonora. EPA has allocated \$60,000 via contract assistance to the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality to mitigate trash dumping impacts by mapping the most concentrated areas of trash and setting priorities for cleanup, facilitating at least two trash cleanup events in 2015 and work with Mexico to mitigate trash impacts originating from illegal dumping and inadequate trash collection.



Environmental Finance Center (EFC) Supports Border: EPA awarded a grant to the EFC in 2014 to support building institutional sustainability along the border. The EFC is working with Tijuana Calidad de Vida (TCV), an urban planning oriented non-profit, to develop sustainable compost services at the compost center they developed under a previous Border 2020 grant. The EFC is also researching viable markets for compost in the region and the feasibility of implementing “green generators” fueled by food scrap and landscape wastes in Tijuana. EFC is also supporting the Sonoran Institute on strategies to identify and engage communities in Mexicali to mitigate illegal trash dumping by using proven social-media and other community outreach tools.

Promoting the Safe Management of Discarded Electronics in Baja CA: Fundación Hélice, an environmental non-profit, completed numerous efforts to advance the safe management of e-waste under a \$46,987 Border 2020 grant, including: collection of 19,150 kg of e-waste via six public events (over 485 families participated);



collaboration with six large Mexicali businesses to collect 1,468 kg of e-waste (over 300 employees participated); and providing 57 recycling professionals with training on responsible recycling (R2) electronic recycling certification requirements. Fundación Hélice also developed a public education campaign using social media, radio, and TV and created “logos” to uniquely communicate the need to safely manage e-waste.

Nogales Diverts Used Motor Oil from Entering Waterways: The Secretariat for Urban Development and Ecology (SUDE) of Nogales, Sonora is working under a \$16,508 Border 2020 grant to train small businesses that generate less than 400 kg of oil per year on best management practices and will construct a transfer station to make it more cost-effective for oil recyclers to collect and transport the used oil for recycling. Since April 2015, SUDE trained 76 small businesses on best management practices and collected over 117,000 liters of used motor oil. SUDE also assisted 12 businesses in registering as hazardous waste generators (and is processing 18 more) to increase their compliance with Mexico’s federal regulations.



Goal 4 – Emergency Preparedness and Response

Arizona/Sonora Emergency Responders Learn About Sulfuric Acid Rail Transport Safety: The Arizona-Sonora Border 2020 Emergency Prevention and Preparedness Task Force hosted a training course on May 11-15 (1/2 day course offered multiple times) provided by Union Pacific in Nogales, Arizona. Over 250 emerging response personnel from the United States and Mexico participated in the course which focused on an introduction to railroad operations and the associated hazards related to tanker cars carrying sulfuric acid.



Baja California Showcases Emergency Management Center: Protección Civil hosted a tour of the very impressive C4 (Command, Control, Communications and Computer) building and showcased the capabilities they have developed for coordinating response to emergencies. Ongoing communication and testing of binational notification systems is a critical component of overall emergency response capabilities.

Arizona-Sonora Emergency Prevention and Preparedness Task Force Meeting: Approximately 85 emergency response personnel from the Arizona-Sonora border participated in an emergency prevention and preparedness task force meeting in San Luis Colorado, Sonora on April 9-10. A key focus of the meeting included kicking-off revisions to the Sister City Emergency Management Plans. The Task Force meeting was preceded by a Traffic Incident Management System (TIMS) Train-the-Trainer Course. Traffic incidents including crashes, disabled vehicles, and debris on the road create unsafe driving conditions, put motorists and responder lives at risk, and account for approximately 25 percent of all traffic delays. First responders in Sonora are now equipped to train others on the system that provides safe and quick incident clearance and interoperable communications.



Goal 5 – Enhance Compliance Assurance and Environmental Stewardship

The California Unified Program Agency (CUPA) Border Panel Convenes in San Diego: The CUPA conference, one of the largest compliance and enforcement events of its kind in California, convened a border program panel organized by San Diego County's Hazardous Materials Program (calcupa.org). The panelists, consisting of Bob Heiss, EPA (OECA); Emmanuel Mendoza, Environment Canada; and Saul Guzman, Baja California Secretariat for Environmental Protection (SPA), provided perspectives on efforts to enhance information-sharing and understanding of each country's respective regulatory and enforcement programs. This panel fulfills Border 2020's commitment to enhance information sharing amongst binational agencies.

Environmental Health

Making a Visible Difference in Communities: Imperial County: EPA is supporting the Imperial Valley community's efforts to protect human health and the environment by including Imperial Valley as a focus community within the "Making a Visible Difference in Communities (MVD)" initiative recently launched by EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. The MVD initiative aims to provide enhanced support to communities in environmentally overburdened, underserved, and economically distressed areas. Border 2020 has funded two projects that fulfill aspects of the MVP initiative including Imperial Valley Child Asthma Program's (IVCAP) *Healthy Homes Healthy Breathing Project* and the Public Health Institute's *Assessment of Environmental Health Data for the California/Mexico Border*, described below. Additional EPA activities are listed in the [Making a Visible Difference in Communities: Imperial Valley Work Plan](#). Please contact Priyanka Pathak for more information (pathak.priyanka@epa.gov, (415) 972-3576).

Promoting Healthy Homes in Imperial Valley, CA: The EPA and Imperial Valley Child Asthma Program co-sponsored a Healthy Homes for Community Health Workers course in El Centro on May 13th. The course helps housing and public health professionals, community health workers, and others to develop critical skills to create a healthier home environment for children and other occupants. Instruction was provided by the City of San Diego's Lead Safety and Healthy Homes Program, a partner in the National Healthy Housing Training Network. Over 40 participants learned how to identify and address common home health hazards, and how to provide healthy homes education and general advice about specific healthy homes problems to landlords, tenants, and other community members. (Jacquelyn Menghrajani, 415-972-3259).



Assessment of Border Environmental Health in the California Border Region: A Border 2020 Grant was awarded in December 2014 to the Public Health Institute to compile and analyze existing border environmental health data, to create a comprehensive snapshot of border environmental health in the California Border Region and to make recommendations on how to obtain additional data and coordinate with Mexico on data gaps. A draft report was submitted to BECC and EPA in June and a final report is due in August. PHI is scheduled to present the findings of their report during the children's health symposium later this year.

Imperial Valley Physicians Learn about Asthma Best Practices: EPA staff from the Border and Children's Health Programs have been planning a series of outreach and education efforts on environmental health along the U.S.-Mexico Border. The first will take place in August in Holtville, CA and will cover asthma treatment best practices for Imperial Valley physicians who work with border communities that typically face the highest asthma hospitalization rates in California.

Building Environmental Health Capacity along the California and Arizona Border: EPA Children's Health and Border Program staff are coordinating with the California Department of Public Health and the Border Health Commission to conduct a series of environmental health training workshops along the U.S.-Mexico Border in California and Arizona. Topics may include indoor/outdoor air quality and asthma triggers, pesticides exposure, lead exposure, and climate change. The three workshops are tentatively scheduled to occur in September in the San Diego-Tijuana, Imperial Valley-Mexicali, and Ambos Nogales areas. Staff from the Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) and from the California Department of Public Health will bring their extensive environmental health expertise and experience working with *promotores* to share best practices and environmental health information.

Border Children's Environmental Health Symposium in the Works: EPA Region 9 will be hosting a Border Children's Environmental Health Symposium in late 2015 or early 2016 in San Diego, California to share the most recent environmental health information and best practices with doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers, health outreach workers, promotores and others in the public health community who work with border communities. The symposium will complement a similar event to be held in El Paso, Texas hosted by EPA Region 6 on September 24-25. The U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission is partnering with EPA on both symposiums and will recruit their binational health networks to participate. The Region 9 Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit doctors and staff will also assist with preparing and presenting the information at both events.