



**Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB)
Discussion With the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)**

**December 15, 2015
11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. EST**

**Teleconference
Call-in: 202-395-6392, pass code: 1921755**

DRAFT DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Welcome and Introductions

*Ann-Marie Gantner, Acting GNEB Designated Federal Officer (DFO), Office of Diversity, Advisory Committee Management and Outreach (ODACMO), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
Paul Ganster, Chair, GNEB*

Ms. Ann-Marie Gantner, Acting GNEB DFO, asked the GNEB members and alternates, CEQ representatives, and others who were participating in the meeting in person and via teleconference to introduce themselves. A list of participants is included in Appendix A. Following introductions, Ms. Gantner welcomed the participants and thanked the CEQ for hosting the meeting. She expressed her gratitude to the GNEB Chair, Dr. Paul Ganster, as well as to the members of the GNEB, for their efforts in composing the GNEB's advice letter to the President and Congress on climate change resilience in the U.S.-Mexico border region. Dr. Ganster also welcomed the participants and expressed his gratitude to the CEQ for hosting.

Overview of the GNEB's Advice Letter and Recommendations on Climate Change Resilience in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region

Paul Ganster, Chair, GNEB

Dr. Ganster opened the meeting with a short discussion of the contents of the GNEB's advice letter, describing underlying themes and reviewing the Board's recommendations. He observed that the purpose of the meeting was to transmit the advice letter formally to the CEQ, as well as begin to solicit input from the Council regarding the full report, which the Board will submit to the President and Congress in 2016.

The GNEB offers advice on environmental issues along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Board was created in the era of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to address potential issues related to the impacts of current and expanding trade on the environment. The Board is comprised of representatives from federal, state and tribal agencies; border communities; academia; and the private sector.

The U.S. section of the U.S.-Mexico border region, which is defined as extended 100 km north of the U.S.-Mexico border, is a unique area of the United States. Excluding San Diego, per capita income is only 65 percent of the U.S. average. Approximately 30 percent of the population lives in chronic poverty. Excluding San Diego and Pima counties, the population is 88 percent Hispanic. The border region also is home to Native American populations. The Board recognizes that poor inhabitants are more vulnerable to negative climate effects. The border region also differs from the rest of the United States because of its proximity to densely populated Mexican cities, which can have transborder environmental impacts, particularly on air and water quality.

The Board's 2015 advice letter to the President focused on actions that federal agencies can initiate in the present fiscal year using existing resources and programs. The advice letter will be followed by a full report, which will provide more detail. In the advice letter, the Board identified two general themes: (1) the federal government has a very significant organizational leadership role in convening and facilitating cooperation of stakeholders at all levels to address climate impacts on the communities of the border region and enhance resiliency; and (2) federal leadership can be key to enhancing crossborder information sharing and cooperation to address impacts and vulnerabilities on a regional basis. The Board recognized that some federal agencies already are performing well in these leadership roles. The Board also offered the following recommendations for federal actions that could be implemented in the current fiscal year:

- Convene stakeholders from both sides of the border to share information on responses to threats to water supplies.
- Enhance storm water harvesting, ground water recharge and ecological water flows to respond to both flood and drought risks.
- Facilitate flood mitigation and watershed management efforts, especially systems with crossborder causes and effects.
- Promote efforts to advance integrated wastewater resource management, innovative technologies and green infrastructure along the border with the goal of providing clean, reliable and affordable water, wastewater and storm water services.
- Promote and incentivize green infrastructure and prioritize its financing for both domestic and binational projects.
- Promote the understanding of ecosystem services and co-benefits of nature-based and carbon mitigation options in water infrastructure projects (e.g., green infrastructure) and coastal adaptation measures (e.g., living shorelines).
- Coordinate efforts across and along the border to prepare for new vectors and vector-borne diseases, as well as other potential health effects related to temperature increases and other climate risks.
- Using existing executive orders, and reflecting community concerns, continue to support, plan and design for the reduction of wait times at the border crossings from Mexico into U.S. border communities—initially through management efforts and full staffing and in the longer term through physical infrastructure improvements.
- All federal agencies should target border urban and rural communities to enhance and increase support for their energy efficiency and security in the face of growing energy demand risks.

- Federal leadership is necessary to enhance the ability of border communities to respond to emergencies such as heat waves, flooding, coastal inundation and wildfires, especially when U.S. and Mexican border communities are affected. An important first step is to modernize and make relevant to border realities the 1980 U.S.-Mexico Agreement on Cooperation during Natural Disasters.

Preliminary Reactions to the GNEB's Advice Letter and Recommendations

Jainey Bavishi, Associate Director for Climate Preparedness and Resilience, CEQ; Sarah Ryker, Deputy Associate Director for Ecosystem Services, CEQ; Alexis Segal, Deputy Associate Director for Ecosystems, CEQ

Ms. Jainey Bavishi thanked Dr. Ganster and the GNEB for their advice and recommendations. She recognized the importance of the issues that the Board had raised. She observed that climate equity is a focus of the Administration, and to a great extent, the Board's recommendations had resonated with the priorities of the Administration. She noted that the Board's advice letter acknowledged much of the activities that the federal government already is performing. Ms. Bavishi highlighted the advice and guidance that the President's State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience, which includes local leaders from the border region, had provided on how federal actions could best serve the communities most affected by climate change.

Regarding climate equity, Resilience AmeriCorps, launched in July 2015, focuses on issues affecting immigrant and refugee communities. Resilience AmeriCorp's particular focus on language access is one that likely will be of interest to the GNEB because of its importance for information sharing.

Many federal activities are ongoing in response to drought. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has allocated \$370 million for more than 100 high-impact conservation projects across the United States, including parts of the border region, designed to improve soil health, water quality and water use efficiency. The Administration is initiating activities on drought preparedness that will culminate in a water summit—convened by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), CEQ and other executive office entities—on World Water Day in March 2016. In addition, the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) effort by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is designed to improve monitoring and forecasting of drought risks and impacts. She suggested that the GNEB contact OSTP to learn more about its efforts to improve availability and access to data from federal and nonfederal sources.

Ms. Sarah Ryker provided information about federal activities related to ecosystem services. In October 2015, CEQ, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and OSTP jointly released a policy guidance to federal agencies instructing all agencies to incorporate assessments of ecosystem services more consistently into their planning and decision making. Ecosystem services are connected to environmental justice issues, and the federal government understands that ecosystem services are of great importance to particular communities such as tribes. Climate change affects ecosystem services. Sophisticated tools are being developed and used to characterize and quantify the effects of particular actions on ecosystem services. There has been interest and activity on assessing ecosystem services by the Mexican government as well, and the U.S. government anticipates more international coordination in ecosystem services assessment.

Ms. Alexis Segal recognized the helpful insights provided by the Board's advice letter. She noted that in December 2014, the Administration released an updated Principles, Requirements and Guidelines for Water and Land Related Resources Implementation Studies, which is a policy guidance for federal agencies considering investments in water resources. It includes ecosystem services but focuses on the

alternatives, including valuing green infrastructure, available to local communities that are partnering with federal agencies for water resources investments. Indigenous people's concerns are emphasized.

Ms. Bavishi added that the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard is being implemented now by federal agencies through rule making and issuing guidance. CEQ and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are providing technical assistance to the agencies in implementation.

Discussion of the GNEB's 17th Report to the President and Congress

Dr. Ganster thanked the representatives of the CEQ for their preliminary response and indicated that the Board looks forward to receiving the CEQ's written response to the advice letter. The participants discussed the timing of the full report with respect to input from the CEQ. Mr. Mark Joyce clarified that by statute, the Board provides an annual report to the President, and the schedule of the report follows the calendar year rather than the federal fiscal year.

A member of the CEQ asked about the Board's concern with regard to invasive species and climate change. Dr. Ganster responded that the issue of invasive species was referred to in the advice letter but had been addressed in greater depth in previous reports. Mr. Jonathan Andrew added that invasive species currently are a problem in the border region and anticipated that climate change will give rise to new challenges.

Ms. Ryker cited a study by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) of the vulnerability of the border area to riparian habitat loss. Loss of riparian habitat affects ecosystem services, including tourism, filtration of agricultural runoff and water quality. Mr. Andrew responded that in the advice letter, the Board recommended that the U.S. government conduct further work on Minute 319. Mr. Russell Frisbie added that Minute 319 was a 5-year pilot agreement between the United States and Mexico that involved the states in the Colorado River basin. The agreement yielded significant benefits in the face of a historic drought, and the Board recommended exploring ways to extend Minute 319 into the future.

The CEQ representatives observed that as the tenure of the current Administration is drawing to a close, greater emphasis is being placed on institutionalizing advances in addressing climate resilience that have been made. Ms. Marissa McInnis suggested that the GNEB focus on collaborating on activities with other EPA groups to complete efforts that have been begun. Mr. Joyce responded that GNEB's mandate is to provide recommendations to the President and Congress; the Board does not have implementation authority. Dr. Ganster noted collaborative efforts across the border, including Border 2020 and the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), and asked the CEQ for suggestions on institutionalizing the ability of stakeholders on both sides of the border to address issues of climate resilience. One example of barriers to collaboration is that state officials who need to travel across the border must obtain approval from the governor, which can take months.

Dr. Keith Pezzoli recognized the CEQ for its emphasis on a place-based approach. He proposed a federal role in a transborder effort to reduce and recover food waste in the San Diego-Tijuana region. Possible benefits from such a program include capturing nutrient flows, providing a sink for carbon, and reducing methane emissions from landfills. Ms. McInnis offered to connect the Board with the individual in the Office of Federal Sustainability who focuses on waste guidance. Federal agencies can serve as models in waste management. Dr. Jeff Payne recognized that such issues as food waste can affect the atmosphere. As with flood risk management, federal agencies can provide a leadership role but must work in concert with communities to achieve behavior change.

Regarding place-based approaches, Ms. Bavishi stated that an example of a place-based approach to resilience is the Strong-Cities, Strong Communities Initiative, in which Brownsville, Texas, participates.

Ms. Laura Gomez is the Team Leader for the initiative in Brownsville. The initiative is a recognition that environmental efforts need to act in parallel to community development to achieve resilience.

Ms. Ryker noted current initiatives between the United States and Mexico to facilitate data sharing. In mid-November 2015, Mexico hosted a meeting of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO). Efforts also are under way to expand the U.S. Open Water Data Initiative across the border. The CEQ can facilitate communication between the Board and U.S. institutions that are arranging higher level data sharing.

The CEQ representatives, EPA and the Board members discussed next steps in preparing the full report. Dr. Ganster indicated that the Board will discuss the content of the 17th Report at its upcoming meeting in Brownsville. At the meeting, tasks for preparing the report will be assigned. The advice letter will form the framework on which the Board will expand in its full report. Dr. Payne suggested that the CEQ provide input to the Board on aligning the focus of its recommendations with the budget priorities of the Administration to optimize the alignment between the Board's advice and what is achievable by the federal agencies.

A CEQ representative responded that many of the Board's recommendations are well aligned with the Administration's priorities, particularly in serving the needs of high-poverty, low English-proficiency communities. Climate equity is a key focus area of the Administration. Dr. Teresa Pohlman indicated that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently has been focusing on climate equity and is evaluating how climate change will affect the movement of goods and people across the border. DHS participates in the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice. An interagency climate justice subgroup also has been formed, of which Dr. Pohlman is a member. Ms. Bavishi suggested that the Board connect with the subgroup, which includes a wide range of federal agencies, to learn about their process and focus. Dr. Ganster noted that the issue of environmental justice is important in the entire border region, as stated in the advice letter. The importance of environmental justice is one of the characteristics that makes the border region unique. More institutionalized efforts are needed to address environmental justice in the border region. The Board will invite the local counsels general to its meeting to foster interactions with border liaisons. Mr. Luis Olmedo welcomed the strong focus by the Administration on climate equity, which is a primary concern in the rural border region of California. Ms. Edna Mendoza suggested having a formal presentation on climate equity at the Board's upcoming meeting. Ms. Bavishi proposed that Ms. Gomez speak to the Board on climate equity.

Ms. Beverly Mather-Marcus remarked on the strong association between environmental change and human health in the border region. Examples are the potential for increased flash flooding causing bacterial contamination of drinking water supplies and drought creating basic sanitation issues. It would be helpful to have input from the CEQ on what investments on both sides of the border will decrease the availability of bacteria. Ms. Mendoza mentioned the need for metrics to measure the effectiveness of investments in infrastructure. In addition, planning and zoning programs are needed on the Mexican side of the border. Dr. Ganster added that new disease vectors are another important issue related to health.

Mr. Jose Angel emphasized the need for a more robust federal response to dumping trash in waterways, particularly in the Mexicali and Tijuana areas. Dr. Ganster agreed with the need for federal agencies to facilitate work on issues affecting binational systems, such as waterways.

Next Steps and Adjournment

Dr. Ganster expressed his gratitude to the CEQ for hosting the meeting and for the input that it will provide to the GNEB in its formal response to the Board's advice letter. He highlighted the substantial agreement between the CEQ's priorities, the priorities of the Board as expressed in its recommendations,

and many ongoing efforts by federal agencies. He thanked the Board members who had participated in the meeting via telephone and in person and looked forward to working together on the full report.

In response to a question by Dr. Pezzoli, Ms. Gantner indicated that now that the Board's advice letter had been formally transmitted to the CEQ, Board members are free to share it publicly.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

Action Items

- ✧ The CEQ will provide a written response to the Board's advice letter.
- ✧ The GNEB will conduct its next public meeting in February 2016 in Brownsville, Texas, with the time and date to be determined.

Appendix A: Discussion Participants

Good Neighbor Environmental Board Chair

Paul Ganster, Ph.D.

Director
Institute for Regional Studies of the Californias
San Diego State University
San Diego, CA

Good Neighbor Environmental Board Nonfederal State, Local and Tribal Representatives

Jose L. Angel

Assistant Executive Officer
California Regional Water Quality Control
Board, Region 7
State Water Resources Control Board
Palm Desert, CA

Lauren Baldwin, LEED-GA

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Evaristo Cruz

Director
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Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
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David J. Eaton, Ph.D.

Bess Harris Jones Centennial Professor
Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs
The University of Texas at Austin
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Edna A. Mendoza

Director
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Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
Tucson, AZ

Mariel Nanasi

Executive Director
New Energy Economy
Santa Fe, NM

Luis Olmedo

Executive Director
Comite Civico Del Valle, Inc.
Brawley, CA

Keith Pezzoli, Ph.D.

Professor of Teaching
Director, Urban Studies and Planning Program
Department of Communication
University of California, San Diego
La Jolla, CA

Thomas Skibitski

Chief, Emergency Response Operations
Office of the Secretary
New Mexico Environment Department
Albuquerque, NM

Good Neighbor Environmental Board Federal Members

*Department of Commerce—National Oceanic
and Atmospheric Administration*

Jeff Payne, Ph.D.

Acting Director
Office for Coastal Management
Mount Pleasant, SC

Department of Energy

Carol Battershell

Deputy Director
Energy Policy and Systems Analysis
Washington, D.C.

Department of Health and Human Services
Jose Luis Velasco
Executive Director
U.S. Section, U.S.-México Border Health
Commission
El Paso, TX

Department of Homeland Security
Teresa R. Pohlman, Ph.D., LEED, AP
Executive Director
Sustainability and Environmental Programs
Undersecretary for Management
Washington, D.C.

Department of the Interior
Jonathan Andrew
Interagency Borderlands Coordinator
Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C.

Environmental Protection Agency
Samuel Coleman, P.E.
Deputy Regional Administrator
Region 6
Dallas, TX

Good Neighbor Environmental Board Designated Federal Officer

Ann-Marie Gantner
Acting Designated Federal Officer
Good Neighbor Environmental Board
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Washington, D.C.

Good Neighbor Environmental Board Federal and State Agency Alternates

Department of Health and Human Services
Lori Navarrete, M.P.H.
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*International Boundary and Water
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Department of State
Beverly Mather-Marcus
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Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Stephen M. Niemeyer, P.E.
Border Affairs Manager and Colonias
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Intergovernmental Relations Division
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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Regional Office Participants

Region 6
Arturo Blanco
Director of Environmental Justice and Tribal
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Dallas, TX

Carlos A. Rincon, Ph.D.
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Border Liaison Office
El Paso, TX

Jenna Manheimer
Environmental Scientist
Dallas, TX

Kevin Shade
Superfund Enforcement Officer
Dallas, TX

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Headquarters Participants

Mark Joyce

Associate Director
Office of Diversity, Advisory Committee
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Washington, D.C.

Council on Environmental Quality Participants

Jainey Bavishi

Associate Director for Climate Preparedness and
Resilience

Anne Coglianese

Intern
Climate Preparedness

Kiryssa Kasprzyk

Intern
Energy and Climate Change

Marissa McInnis

Senior Program Manager

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Jennifer Lee, Ph.D.

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Sarah Ryker

Deputy Associate Director for Ecosystem
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Alexis Segal

Deputy Associate Director for Ecosystems

Gina Weinstock

Deputy Associate Director for Climate
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Appendix B: Discussion Agenda



Agenda

Good Neighbor Environmental Board Discussion with the White House Council on Environmental Quality

December 15, 2015; 11:00 – 12:30 p.m. EST

White House Council on Environmental Quality
722 Jackson Place, NW
First Floor Conference Room

BRIDGE NUMBER: 202-395-6392 PASSCODE: 1921755

- I. **Welcome and Introductions**
 - Paul Ganster, Chair, Good Neighbor Environmental Board
- II. **Overview of the Good Neighbor Environmental Board’s Advice Letter and Recommendations on Climate Change Resilience in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region**
 - Paul Ganster, Chair, Good Neighbor Environmental Board
- III. **Preliminary Reactions to the Good Neighbor Environmental Board’s Advice Letter and Recommendations**
 - Jainey Bavishi, Associate Director for Climate Preparedness and Resilience, White House Council on Environmental Quality
 - All—Discussion
- IV. **Discussion on the Good Neighbor Environmental Board’s 17th Report to the President and the Congress**
 - All—Discussion
- V. **Next Steps and Adjournment**