



## Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB) Meeting

January 31, 2014  
12:00 – 4:00 p.m. EST

Call-In: 1-866-299-3188; Conference Code: 202-233-0068#  
Adobe Connect: <https://epa.connectsolutions.com/gnebmeetingroom/>

### FINAL MEETING SUMMARY

#### Welcome and Introductions

*AnnMarie Gantner, Acting GNEB Designated Federal Officer (DFO); Mark Joyce, Office of Diversity, Advisory Committee Management and Outreach (ODACMO), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Diane Austin, Chair, GNEB*

Ms. AnnMarie Gantner conducted a roll call and stated that the minutes would be available following the meeting for participants who could not attend or needed to leave early. Mr. Mark Joyce welcomed the attendees and thanked them for their participation. He sent regards from Ms. Denise Benjamin-Sirmons, who was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Joyce expressed appreciation to the GNEB members for their efforts to prepare the Advice Letter, which was submitted to the President via the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) in December 2013. Ms. Alice Ewen, Deputy Associate Director for Lands at the CEQ, would be joining the meeting to deliver several comments from the CEQ regarding the Advice Letter. Mr. Joyce said that he was looking forward to working with the Board to complete the full GNEB Report in 2014.

Dr. Diane Austin echoed Mr. Joyce's welcome and appreciation for the GNEB members' efforts. She explained that the CEQ had provided initial feedback in December 2013 following the official transmittal of the Advice Letter. The CEQ provided additional details during a discussion held in January 2014. Dr. Austin noted that the Advice Letter represented the first phase of the process, which would culminate with the production of the full GNEB Report later this year.

Dr. Austin thanked Ms. Gantner for informing the Board members about Ms. Jill Sherman-Warne's tragic accident. Ms. Sherman-Warne was moved to a rehabilitation facility; her address and telephone number are available for those who would like to contact her. Dr. Austin explained that she had relayed the Board's sentiments and hope for a rapid recovery to Ms. Sherman-Warne, and flowers were delivered to her at the hospital on behalf of the Board.

## **Overview of the Agenda**

*Diane Austin, Chair, GNEB*

Dr. Austin reviewed the meeting agenda. She explained that the discussion would begin with a conversation about roles and responsibilities, including an introduction of the new GNEB Acting DFO. Dr. Austin reminded the meeting participants to mute their lines to reduce background noise and join the meeting using Adobe® Connect. Participants should electronically “raise their hand” to speak and use a “thumbs up” to vote during the meeting. Dr. Austin expressed appreciation to Ms. Allie Wechsler and Dr. Jennifer McCulley for their assistance in preparing meeting notes and summaries. Continuing through the agenda, Dr. Austin explained that Ms. Ewen will provide preliminary feedback from the CEQ on the Advice Letter. Dr. Austin indicated that the Board also will establish a timeline, discuss overall structure and establish workgroups for the 2014 GNEB Report. The meeting will conclude with a discussion of a letter from the GNEB members to Ms. Cynthia Jones-Jackson expressing appreciation for her service. Dr. Austin solicited additional agenda topics. Hearing none, she asked Mr. Joyce and Ms. Gantner to explain the reorganization of their office.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

*AnnMarie Gantner, Acting GNEB DFO; Mark Joyce, ODACMO, EPA*

Mr. Joyce explained that the former Office of Federal Advisory Committee Management and Outreach (OFACMO) had merged with EPA’s office responsible for Agency diversity and inclusion efforts to create the Office of Diversity, Advisory Committee Management, and Outreach (ODACMO). The Office’s responsibilities for Advisory Committee management remain the same. Mr. Joyce welcomed Ms. Gantner as the new Acting DFO; she has assumed more responsibility for the Board, and her appointment as GNEB DFO will be formally announced soon. Mr. Joyce thanked Ms. Gantner for her service and affirmed that he would remain engaged with the Board as well.

Because of budget and staff reductions and other reasons, Mr. Joyce explained that the ODACMO is unable to maintain its historic level of support to the Board, which is reflected in the additional responsibilities that have been assumed by the GNEB members and Chair. Mr. Joyce expressed his appreciation for the additional effort undertaken by GNEB members to keep the Board’s activities coordinated and moving forward. Mr. Timothy Treviño will assume the role of Vice Chair to assist with management responsibilities for the Board. Mr. Joyce thanked Mr. Treviño for taking on this role on behalf of EPA, Dr. Austin and the GNEB members. Despite the limited budget, Mr. Joyce noted that funds likely would be available to hold a face-to-face GNEB meeting in El Paso, Texas, in May 2014.

Ms. Gantner stated that she was looking forward to being the official DFO for the GNEB and working with the Board in this new capacity. Her hope is to continue providing high-quality support to the GNEB. Ms. Gantner also encouraged the Board members to contact her via telephone or email with any questions or issues.

Dr. Austin expressed her appreciation to Mr. Joyce and Ms. Gantner for endeavoring to ensure that the work of the Board is accomplished despite the reorganization and budget reductions, including the preparation of high-quality reports to provide important information to the President and Congress. She thanked EPA for acknowledging the additional work undertaken by the Board as a result of staffing and resource reductions and for working to find the funding for a face-to-face meeting.

Ms. Edna Mendoza explained that because she had taken medical leave in 2013, she did not know whether the draft Advice Letter had been distributed to GNEB members prior to submission to the President via the CEQ. Dr. Austin replied that several drafts were distributed to Board members for review, and several calls had been scheduled to formally approve the final draft. The Advice Letter was officially conveyed to the CEQ on December 19, 2013. Dr. Austin commented that she would follow up to ensure that Ms. Mendoza received all of the email messages related to finalizing the Advice Letter. Ms. Mendoza noted that she was interested in sharing the Advice Letter with partners in her state.

Dr. Austin thanked Ms. Gantner and Mr. Treviño for agreeing to serve in the positions of Acting DFO and Vice Chair of GNEB, respectively. Dr. Austin and Mr. Treviño will determine the most efficient way to share their responsibilities.

## **Public Comments**

There were no written public comments received by the Acting DFO prior to this meeting, and no oral public comments were offered during the meeting when Dr. Austin called for comments.

## **Council on Environmental Quality**

*Alice Ewen, Deputy Associate Director of Lands, CEQ*

Dr. Austin introduced Ms. Ewen, who provided comments and feedback from the CEQ related to the GNEB Advice Letter. Ms. Ewen thanked the Board for the invitation to attend the meeting, and stated that she was looking forward to continuing the discussion as the Board develops the full report. On behalf of Ms. Nancy Sutley, Chairwoman of the CEQ, and Mr. Jay Jensen, Associate Director for Land and Water Ecosystems, Ms. Ewen thanked the Board members for their efforts and expressed appreciation for the time and attention given to these issues. She commented that the CEQ would focus in the coming months on the Board's recommendations, ongoing agency efforts and prioritized activities. Ms. Ewen explained that the CEQ intends to provide a more thorough response to the Advice Letter for the GNEB meeting in April. She noted that the CEQ's Chair, Ms. Sutley, would be departing soon and the resulting change in leadership may alter the schedule for the response.

Ms. Ewen explained that Ms. Sutley was interested in metrics and models, including uniform metrics that would be most helpful at ensuring that activities at the border move forward. The White House is pursuing open data initiatives, which provide a leveraging opportunity. Ms. Ewen commented on the benefit of providing successful examples that could be replicated in

other contexts or scaled up. Also, the Board should consider the implementation of the President's Climate Action Plan in the coming year; recommendations relevant to the Plan should be a focus of the GNEB Report. The degree to which the Board's recommendations can help to fulfill the Climate Action Plan goals will lend relevance to the GNEB Report.

Dr. Austin noted that resources are a challenge, and she asked how the GNEB should address reduced budgets in the report. Ms. Ewen noted that it would be helpful to convey the recommendations in the form of priorities; policy actions that could be initiated with modest resources and within a short timeframe should be identified. High-value recommendations should be accompanied by the projected cost. Ms. Ewen commented that the current limited budget environment was unlikely to change, and the GNEB's advice should be framed within existing resources.

Ms. Ewen explained that the CEQ will be initiating a request for comments through the Southwest Border Interagency Working Group (SWBIWG) to synthesize and provide direction for the comments, including advice that can be implemented by the Administration. Additional constructive feedback will be provided in time for the GNEB's face-to-face meeting in May 2014. Dr. Austin noted that receiving feedback from the CEQ by April 2014 will be helpful because it will allow time to research identified needs. At the May 2014 Board meeting, the GNEB members will discuss the draft recommendations and incorporate any additional feedback into the process. Ms. Ewen agreed that the CEQ would aim for the April 2014 deadline. Dr. Austin thanked Ms. Ewen for her input and said that she was looking forward to receiving the detailed comments from the CEQ.

## **Discussion of the Report**

Dr. Austin initiated the discussion of the timeline and structure for the 2014 GNEB Report. Ideally, the members would leave this meeting with a clear understanding of the workgroup goals, composition and leadership. Dr. Austin relayed a comment from Ms. Sutley from the January 2014 meeting: "I don't want ecological restoration just to be in the eye of the beholder, especially in a binational context." Dr. Austin explained that the CEQ needs the Board to be as specific as possible in explaining what ecological restoration means and providing recommendations to which federal agencies can respond. She noted that the Board will be receiving more detailed feedback from the CEQ. Dr. Austin stated that the 2013 Advice Letter provided some specific and general recommendations, and the 2014 GNEB Report will provide more detail, defining ecological restoration, giving examples and providing the federal agencies with recommendations for specific tasks. The challenge is to move the Advice Letter ideas into actionable strategies in the report.

### ***Timeline***

Dr. Austin emphasized that much effort will be needed during the next few months to gather information for each of the sections, add details and identify case studies. The goal is to develop strong, evidence-based recommendations. The aim of the upcoming face-to-face GNEB meeting in May 2014 will be to discuss and finalize specific and targeted recommendations for the report. By the conclusion of that meeting, the Board will know which sections of the report require more

evidence that must be gathered. The draft should be completed by the end of the summer, when it will be disseminated to the Board members for comment. At the September 2014 meeting, which will be a virtual meeting, Board members will finalize the report for an October or early November submittal. If any remaining issues that warrant attention are identified, a meeting in October or November 2014 will be scheduled to finalize the report for submission. Following submittal of the 2014 GNEB Report, the Board will identify a topic for 2015 and begin developing recommendations on the new topic. Dr. Austin asked Board members participating via Adobe® Connect to indicate their agreement with the timeline with a “thumbs up.” All members approved of the report timeline.

### ***Report Structure***

The participants then discussed the overall report structure. Dr. Austin solicited input about how the Board can most effectively present the information to the CEQ, the President and the public. She shared the Advice Letter with the participants using Adobe® Connect. Dr. Austin noted that to draft the Advice Letter last year, the Board formed four workgroups. She proposed that the Board also form workgroups to draft the report and requested comments from last year’s workgroup Chairs on what did and did not work in the preparation of the 2013 Advice Letter with respect to the configuration of workgroups and structure of the Advice Letter.

Mr. Stephen Niemeyer, whose workgroup had addressed the topic of security, indicated that one challenge was the late receipt of input from various parties. More timely contributions would have permitted earlier dissemination of the section for review, allowing more time for thoughtful input. Dr. Austin agreed that it is difficult to incorporate ideas that are received at the last minute—several late contributions to the Advice Letter were covered with a single sentence. Early participation is critical to the development of a quality report.

Mr. Niemeyer stated that Dr. Greg Eckert will be helpful in soliciting early contributions because he is an expert in ecosystem restoration and knows many individuals from the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) who are willing to contribute. He added that one contribution to the Advice Letter was not in a format that could be used at the time. Receiving information from individuals on time, in the correct format, and based on common sense and good science would be helpful.

Dr. Cyrus Reed, who noted that he was involved in two of the 2013 workgroups, suggested focusing on border program efforts related to ecological restoration to raise the profile of the topic by leveraging Border 2020.

Dr. Austin reiterated Ms. Sutley’s comment about including in the report specific actions to which agencies could respond. It will be important to mine the details of which programs perform ecological restoration, as well as the time and resource barriers that prevent other efforts from being implemented.

Dr. Teresa Pohlman commented that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) attempts to perform ecological restoration, but resources are a challenge due in part to funding restrictions. She suggested recommending certain levels of funding for ecological restoration to benefit the agencies.

Dr. Austin explained that the initial CEQ feedback suggested that the Board elaborate on several cases, discover where efforts could be increased, identify collaborations that deserve prioritized attention, and evaluate the resources currently being spent. The larger question is how ecological restoration can contribute to greater border security. It is important to be as specific as possible in the recommendations because resources are limited and must be spent wisely.

Dr. Eckert suggested that all of the Advice Letter recommendations, identified issues and examples be written on “sticky notes” and affinity diagrams be used to evaluate common threads for the new workgroups. Dr. Austin reminded the Board members that the GNEB’s objective was to develop a report structure that makes sense and presents specific instructions for implementation.

Dr. Keith Pezzoli expressed admiration for the Board members for their consideration of this difficult subject. He commented that the notion of operationalizing the concept of ecological restoration and the development of intervention strategies were critical components of the report. Dr. Pezzoli suggested coming to an agreement on the definition of the term “ecological restoration,” reaching consensus on several successful examples, and then determining the requisite conditions leading to the success for each example (e.g., resources, incentives, communication, data sharing, implementation capability, awareness of the importance of ecological restoration). Understanding the conditions that need to be present for successful ecological restoration will allow the Board to present a framework for the identification of promising areas for intervention. Dr. Pezzoli reiterated that the report should be organized to present a definition of ecological restoration, successful examples and suggested interventions using the identified framework of policy, programmatic and geographic parameters that contributed to the successful examples.

Dr. Austin agreed that it would be helpful to define ecological restoration and note that it manifests differently in certain conditions (e.g., urban environments versus agricultural lands). She stated that the Board could not research and develop a model, but could identify the conditions that have allowed for successful ecological restoration efforts. Ultimately, the Board needs to address what is unique about the border environment, including the challenges related to the binational context.

Dr. Austin suggested considering the commonalities between particular ecosystems and ecoregions that could be extrapolated to different parts of the border region that also have security activity. She solicited feedback from the Board members as to whether this was a useful framework for the report.

Mr. Kevin Bixby suggested considering major river systems as a separate type of ecosystem to ensure comprehensive discussion at an appropriate level of detail. Dr. Eckert noted that understanding whether urban restoration is independent of ecoregions would require additional analysis. He commented that the ecoregional approach provides a common context for border security issues because ecoregional boundaries do not stop at the border. Border security issues often are related to Mexico’s infrastructure, as natural resource damage is limited in locations where few people attempt to cross the border.

Ms. Alison Krepp agreed that structuring the report around ecoregions would be an optimal way to organize the report. The stressors and challenges for each ecoregion could be discussed in the context of how they are handled to accomplish ecological restoration. Dr. Eckert acknowledged that it would be easy to develop a table with a general description of typical stressors (e.g., mining, forestry, fire exclusion, invasive species, water demand). Different regions experience varied severity of different stressors: mining, for example, is more extensive in the Sonoran desert than in southeast Texas, whereas fire exclusion is less of an issue in the Sonoran than points east. Ms. Krepp suggested evaluating the relative severity of the issues across regions to help direct the case studies. Dr. Austin agreed that this approach would address the issue of how limited resources should best be deployed. The examples should showcase where the issues are being addressed in effective ways. The examples of ecological restoration that address the major stressors in each ecoregion would guide the selection of case studies.

Ms. Krepp also noted that the report could focus on large as well as small, more cost-effective initiatives. For example, the report could highlight a success story describing the handling of invasive species, which could ground some of the recommendations and coordinate additional activities in the region.

Dr. Eckert proposed an alternative method to organize the report through coarse and fine filters. Issues of a large spatial scale have wide-ranging effects, and small projects often can be leveraged to achieve landscape-wide success. Focusing on specific ecoregions is one way to organize the issues logically. Dr. Pohlman agreed with the idea of coarse and fine filters. She commented that the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has integrated natural resource management plans; investigating the operational aspects of ecological restorations in the context of federal mandates will ensure that recommendations do not hinder operations but rather facilitate ecological restoration.

Dr. Austin agreed with the approach, emphasizing the need to address ecoregions, including rivers and urban systems. The report then could address topics of smaller granularity. For each section of the report, the assumptions and necessary resources should be addressed, evidence should be presented, and agency efforts in the context of federal mandates should be described. Dr. Pohlman agreed, explaining that educating local agency staff is critical, as many are younger in age and passionate about restoring the environment. This presents an opportunity to take advantage of the infrastructure in place to educate these individuals who are available to help.

Mr. Treviño expressed appreciation for all of the Board members' suggestions. He seconded Dr. Pohlman's comments, emphasizing the need to provide local examples within an operational focus. He also reminded participants about the current financial situation at the federal, state and local levels; resources are being increasingly constrained. The Board needs to present realistic recommendations. Mr. Treviño supported the demonstration of small, successful projects as case studies that complement federal efforts. Dr. Austin reiterated that the cases should be relevant to the federal government, which is the target of the GNEB Report, and should identify and complement resources already being used to address ecological restoration. Although the GNEB cannot research the effectiveness of a particular restoration activity or collect new data, the Board members should consider the available data that can address those questions.

Mr. Niemeyer noted that it is imperative to communicate how funds can be used more intelligently. Mr. Luis Olmedo agreed that financial resources, including water resources, continue to be a challenge. Dr. Austin suggested that the Board members work with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and states to investigate efforts that could be effective. The expertise of the Board can be leveraged to determine how the efforts will translate “on the ground.” Dr. Austin agreed that financial issues should be addressed within the GNEB Report, including the concerns faced under different conditions. Funds available for ecological restoration are driven by many factors, including population, which must be considered.

Dr. Austin solicited input on other areas that should be included in the report. Mr. Vizzier suggested conducting a survey of local voluntary efforts, such as the removal of invasive species within parks, and determining which are successful. He noted that the Natural History Museum sponsors events to remove invasive species from creeks and bays, but he was unaware of a single clearinghouse of information. Mr. Vizzier suggested looking at NGOs, such as the Sierra Club, to find examples of ecological restoration projects. Dr. Austin asked whether these types of restoration efforts are being tracked across the federal government, with annual data collected for projects and expenditures. According to Dr. Eckert, the National Park Service (NPS) restoration goals are limited and do not overlap with invasive species management or fire; those data are not being collected. Dr. Eckert commented that information could be collected from bureaus, but the division of the efforts along the border is uncertain. Ms. Mendoza commented that metrics are connected to funding sources and specific projects; results are not conveyed in broad terms of overall ecological restoration.

***Dr. Austin conveyed the importance of noting the difficulties in collecting the data. Several years ago, the GNEB Report contained information about who was responsible in each state for water quantity and quality. Representative states and agencies were queried as to the data collected and where they are housed. A similar effort is needed for this year’s report; the data must be collected to understand the success of ecological restoration projects. Workgroups***

Dr. Austin moved the discussion from the organization of the report into defining the workgroups. She reiterated the structure that had been discussed: ecoregions, ecosystems and case studies, as well as administrative and resource issues. She asked whether the participants were comfortable having one workgroup investigate ecoregions and another workgroup address water systems. Dr. Austin commented that the concept of “ecosystem restoration” was described adequately in the Advice Letter, and she did not think there was a need to revisit that discussion. The participants agreed that the report could simply reference the definition promulgated in the Advice Letter.

Dr. Eckert proposed that the Board utilize the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) ecoregional assessments to determine how coarsely and finely filtered issues are defined. The workgroups could be oriented around narrow geographical areas to identify relevant examples. Dr. Eckert volunteered to develop a narrative of ecoregions. Dr. Pohlman suggested considering the types of recommendations that would be helpful for the report’s audience. For example, the President would benefit from practically oriented recommendations that reflect common goals for the agencies. Dr. Reed agreed with Dr. Pohlman and noted that the ecoregion approach might not be amenable to addressing larger, process-related issues. He suggested that the recommendations



address how Border 2020, the Endangered Species Act and other federal efforts address ecological restoration.

Dr. Austin noted the workgroup structure might change by the end of the process. The important objective at this time is to begin gathering data and identifying case studies. The goal is to concur on certain case studies by March 2014, and then take the next steps to develop the report. Several iterations might be needed before the final report structure is determined. Dr. Austin suggested using a combined top-down (i.e., by administrative entity) and bottom-up (i.e., by area) approach. Case studies will illuminate particular challenges in certain border areas. An administrative entity approach will identify where restoration is happening within border-specific programs.

The Board members also should ensure that the report is clearly focused on border issues, although the ecoregions extend beyond the border region. Mr. Jose Angel expressed concern that watersheds extend beyond ecoregions as well, which is a potential challenge. Dr. Austin proposed that the workgroups begin with existing definitions to determine the regions, understanding that there will not be a perfect overlap between ecoregions, watershed boundaries and the border region, which is a political boundary. The report will describe details of particular ecosystems along the border that warrant attention. The recommendations should determine what can be done in the border region to benefit ecological restoration in the various areas.

Dr. Austin conveyed the importance of ensuring focused but not overly small workgroups. She reiterated the suggestion that the proposed workgroups address ecoregions, border regions, major watersheds and urban areas. Dr. Austin asked the participants for additional feedback about the proposed workgroups.

Ms. Mendoza suggested that the GNEB prepare a map layered with the border, ecoregions, watersheds and urban zones. Dr. Eckert agreed to approach the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and bureaus to develop the map. He asserted that the information could be identified for both sides of the border. The ecoregion approach would provide an ecological and regional context, and the GNEB would report on activities in the border areas. Dr. Austin expressed support for the creation of a map demonstrating how ecoregions extend beyond the border region and delineating the activities related to ecological restoration along the border. Dr. Eckert suggested that one workgroup investigate the effectiveness of scaling up existing activities within a broad perspective. Dr. Austin agreed that one workgroup should focus on standards and effectiveness, including measures and metrics as well as how small projects could be scaled up.

The participants discussed a second workgroup that could address administrative and operational questions related to government efforts at ecosystem restoration by looking broadly at agency responsibilities and specific programs (e.g., Border 2020). Ms. Mendoza commented on the need to include federal members in that group. This workgroup could describe the agency activities, successes, challenges, efficiencies and priorities. The meeting attendees agreed that this workgroup was feasible.

Dr. Austin asked how the ecoregion workgroups should be organized. Dr. Eckert suggested that it would be effective for the different groups to work together to communicate specific examples

of ecosystem restoration. Mr. Niemeyer suggested one group for ecoregions and one group for water basins. This will enable members from the different ecoregions to compare information.

Ms. Krepp suggested gathering as much information as possible at the beginning of the process before delineating the common structure later. A common structure (e.g., lessons learned, success stories) might arise as the workgroups proceed. Dr. Austin asserted that the ecoregions workgroup should contain representatives from each ecoregion as well as individuals with a broad perspective.

Dr. Austin acknowledged that the water basin workgroup could leverage the previous GNEB Report to help analyze ecosystem restoration. Mr. Vizzier commented that in some cases but not always, a river basin dominates the ecoregion. Mr. Bixby noted that water experts will be solicited for the water basin workgroup, which will focus initially on the Colorado and Rio Grande river basins.

The participants agreed on the following four workgroups:

1. Standards, metrics and measures of ecological restoration and the effectiveness of scaling up.
2. Administrative and operational issues, particularly within federal agencies and tribal, state and local concerns.
3. Ecoregions.
4. Water basins.

Dr. Austin queried the participants to ensure that the four workgroups addressed all of the identified issues to be addressed by the report, and the members confirmed that they did. Mr. Niemeyer supported the approach and encouraged the Board to begin developing text for the report.

The GNEB members were asked to volunteer for one or more workgroups, and workgroup Chairs were selected. The workgroup composition was decided as follows:

**Workgroup 1: Standards, Metrics and Measures of Ecological Restoration and the Effectiveness of Scaling Up**

Greg Eckert (Co-Chair)  
Stephen Niemeyer (Co-Chair)  
Jack Monger

**Workgroup 2: Administrative and Operational Issues, Particularly Within Federal Agencies and Tribal, State and Local Concerns**

Evaristo Cruz (Co-Chair)  
Teresa Pohlman (Co-Chair)  
Greg Eckert  
Steven Kameny

Alison Krepp  
Keith Pezzoli  
Cyrus Reed  
Mike Vizzier

### **Workgroup 3: Ecoregions**

Keith Pezzoli (Chair)  
Jose Angel  
Kevin Bixby  
Evaristo Cruz  
Edna Mendoza  
Luis Olmedo  
Sherry Sass  
Mike Vizzier

### **Workgroup 4: River Basins**

Stephen Niemeyer (Co-Chair)  
Cyrus Reed (Co-Chair)  
Jose Angel  
Kevin Bixby  
Edna Mendoza  
Jaime Michael  
Luis Olmedo  
Keith Pezzoli  
Sally Spener

Dr. Austin requested that Board members who had not yet volunteered for a workgroup think about where they could contribute their expertise. Mr. Treviño and Dr. Austin will be involved with all of the workgroups.

Dr. Austin solicited questions or comments. Ms. Mendoza asked about the protocol for reaching out to local task forces that report to federal agencies. She expressed the concern that the border context is different from other situations, and it is important to receive honest answers to requests for information to ensure that the GNEB Report is as useful as possible. Mr. Joyce commented that the Board's federal members are the official representatives for their agencies, and they should be involved in all communications regarding their agencies to ensure that they are aware of the proceedings and to confirm transparency. Dr. Pohlman noted that the daily patrol operation staff members at the border are very good at what they do, but they do not set the policy for the DHS. Dr. Austin reiterated the procedure: Board members interested in contacting local agency staff should contact the federal representative first with their request. If the federal member does not respond, the Board member should contact the DFO and Chair for assistance. Mr. Joyce commented that instances of unresponsive agencies have been rare, and future issues will be addressed to ensure proper communication.

Dr. Eckert volunteered to identify key informants for each ecoregion. He commented that Board members could copy him when contacting local or regional partnerships within the DOI. Dr. Austin encouraged GNEB members to be proactive in contacting the federal agency representatives, who might refer them to the appropriate contact person within that agency.

### ***Next Steps***

Ms. Gantner explained that she will send an email to each workgroup to distribute the list of workgroup members and email contacts so that the members can communicate. The Chairs for each workgroup will decide when and how frequently meetings are conducted. Ms. Gantner can coordinate the meetings, or the Chairs can communicate meeting details to their workgroup members ensuring that Ms. Gantner, Mr. Joyce, Dr. Austin and Mr. Treviño are copied on the emails. Dr. Austin requested that all workgroups meet by February 14, 2014.

Dr. Austin reminded the GNEB members that it is permissible for workgroups to hold closed meetings (i.e., not open to the public) under the rules of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) because the workgroup is a small subset of the Board. If the number of members participating in a workgroup meeting approaches a quorum, then the meeting must be open to the public, and Ms. Gantner will need to submit a *Federal Register* notice for the meeting 1 month in advance. If two or more workgroups need to communicate, Dr. Austin suggested that the workgroup Chairs hold a conversation and then relay the information back to the workgroup members. Communications between workgroups also could be sent through Ms. Gantner and Mr. Joyce.

The participants discussed whether it would be advantageous to schedule a Board meeting for March 2014. Ms. Gantner reminded the attendees that cancelling a meeting is an involved process that requires justification. Dr. Austin commented that she and Mr. Treviño will be participating on the workgroup conference calls and will assess the need for a March 2014 meeting in time to publish the *Federal Register* notice.

## **Other Issues**

### ***Letter to Ms. Cynthia Jones-Jackson***

Dr. Austin informed the Board members that she was drafting a letter for Ms. Jones-Jackson to thank her for her service to the GNEB and indicate that the Board has benefited greatly from her insights. Dr. Austin requested that the members send her any examples of specific interactions to include in the letter. Given that the retirement party for Ms. Jones-Jackson is scheduled for the week of February 17, 2014, Dr. Austin requested that all materials be sent to her no later than February 14, 2014.

### ***Face-to-Face Meeting***

The participants discussed the May 2014 face-to-face GNEB meeting in El Paso, Texas. The structure of the 1½ day meeting has not yet been decided; members could travel in the morning of the first day with the meeting beginning in the afternoon, followed by a full-day meeting the

following day, or members could fly in the evening before, meet the entire next day, and then fly out the afternoon of the second day, following a half-day meeting. The important consideration is that funding is only available for two hotel nights.

After the May 2014 meeting has been confirmed by EPA, the Board members will determine the ideal dates for the meeting. Ms. Gantner will conduct a poll to garner the availability of the Board members. Sooner is better for determining the date of the meeting because Ms. Stephanie McCoy will be distributing travel information for new members and the process can be lengthy. The face-to-face meeting presents an excellent opportunity for an intense working session to accomplish many things and get to know each other better.

Dr. Carlos Rincón commented that the Joint Advisory Committee for the Improvement of Air Quality meeting will be held on Thursday, May 22, 2014, and several GNEB members will be attending that meeting. Dr. Austin acknowledged that meeting in late May will allow additional time to draft report content. The workgroups should expect to produce and distribute drafts to the full Board by mid-April 2014, in advance of the May meeting.

Mr. Joyce commented that he would coordinate with Dr. Rincón, who has assisted in the past during the planning process. Mr. Rincón noted that he will confer with the official GNEB representatives in EPA Regions 6 and 9 regarding the assigned workgroups. Dr. Austin acknowledged the importance of including regional EPA staff in the development of the report.

## **Adjournment**

Mr. Joyce, Ms. Gantner and Dr. Austin thanked the participants for the excellent discussion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

## **Action Items**

- ✧ The workgroup Chairs will schedule workgroup meetings within 2 weeks to begin developing content for the 2014 GNEB Report.
- ✧ The Board members should send material to Dr. Austin by February 14, 2014, for inclusion in an appreciation letter to Ms. Jones-Jackson.

## **Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB) Meeting Participants**

### **Nonfederal State, Local and Tribal Members**

#### **Diane Austin, Ph.D. (Chair)**

Associate Research Anthropologist  
Bureau of Applied Research in  
Anthropology  
University of Arizona  
Tucson, AZ

#### **Timothy Treviño (Vice-Chair)**

Senior Director of Strategic Planning &  
Agency Communications  
Alamo Area Council of Governments  
San Antonio, TX

#### **Gerardo E. Alvidrez**

EH&S Manager  
Cardinal Health Medical Group  
El Paso, TX

#### **Jose Angel**

Assistant Executive Officer  
Colorado River Basin Region  
California Regional Water Quality  
Control Board  
Palm Desert, CA

#### **Kevin Bixby**

Executive Director  
Southwest Environmental Center  
Las Cruces, NM

#### **Evaristo Cruz**

Director  
Environmental Management Office  
Ysleta del Sur Pueblo  
El Paso, TX

#### **Edna A. Mendoza**

Director  
Office of Border Environmental  
Protection  
Arizona Department of Environmental  
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**AnnMarie Gantner**  
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**Region 6**

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## Good Neighbor Environmental Board

### Agenda

Friday, January 31, 2014

12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. (EST)

Call-In: 866-299-3188, Conference Code: 2022330068

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- 12:00 p.m. **Welcome and Introductions**
- AnnMarie Gantner  
Acting GNEB Designated Federal Officer
  - Mark Joyce, Associate Director  
U.S. EPA Office of Diversity, Advisory Committee Management and Outreach
  - Diane Austin, Chair  
Good Neighbor Environmental Board
  - Board Members
- 12:10 – 12:20 **Overview of Agenda**
- Diane Austin, Chair  
Good Neighbor Environmental Board
- 12:20 – 12:35 **Roles and Responsibilities**
- EPA – Office reorganization
  - Board
- 12:35 – 12:45 **Public Comments**
- 12:45 – 1:00 **Council on Environmental Quality**
- Alice Ewen  
Deputy Associate Director of Lands
- 1:00 – 3:30 **Discussion of Report**
- Feedback on Advice Letter from CEQ
  - Timeline
  - Overall report structure
  - Establish workgroups
  - Next steps
- 3:30 – 4:00 **Other Issues**
- Letter to Cynthia Jones-Jackson
  - May face-to-face meeting
    - El Paso, TX
- 4:00 **Adjournment**

These minutes are an accurate description of the matters discussed during this meeting.



Diane Austin  
Chair  
Good Neighbor Environmental Board

03/26/2014

Date

The Good Neighbor Environmental Board was created by the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative Act of 1992. The board is responsible for providing advice to the President and Congress on environmental and infrastructure issues and needs within the states contiguous to Mexico. The findings and recommendations of the Board do not represent the views of the Agency, and this document does not represent information approved or disseminated by the Environmental Protection Agency.

**Gantner, Ann-Marie**

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**From:** Austin, Diane E - (daustin) <daustin@email.arizona.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 26, 2014 9:39 PM  
**To:** Gantner, Ann-Marie  
**Subject:** January meeting summary

Dear AnnMarie,

I approve the January 31, 2014 meeting summary.

Diane Austin  
Chair  
GNEB