

-----Original Message-----

From: Coleman, Sam

Sent: Wednesday, January 27, 2016 8:50 AM

To: 'Coglianese, Anne C. EOP/CEQ (Intern)'; salvador.salinas@tx.usda.gov; jeff.payne@noaa.gov; jose.velasco@hhs.gov; teresa.pohlman@hq.dhs.gov; PoynterRM@state.gov; Sylvia.Grijalva@dot.gov; ed.drusina@ibwc.gov; lisa.holguin@ibwc.gov; Carol.Battershell@hq.doe.gov; jonathan_andrew@ios.doi.gov

Cc: Bavishi, Jainey K. EOP/CEQ; McInnis, Marissa K. EOP/CEQ

Subject: RE: Input requested: Response to GNEB Advice Letter

Thank you for forwarding the 2015 Advice Letter to the President on adverse environmental impacts from climate change risks in the U.S.-Mexico border region, and for the opportunity to comment. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is committed to supporting the Administration's efforts to address climate change, particularly in vulnerable communities along the U.S.-Mexico border characterized by low-income, substandard housing and inadequate water and sanitation access. The EPA appreciates the recommendations provided by the Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB) as we continue to tackle environmental challenges along border.

The EPA actively participates in the GNEB through board and community meetings that include experienced stakeholders from both the U.S. and Mexico. The EPA supports efforts to build strong coalitions and empower resiliency at the local, state, and federal level, while highlighting the impacts of climate change, solving trans-boundary issues, and mitigating environmental and health effects that often impact the most vulnerable populations.

The EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs (OITA) leads oversight of the Agency's binational efforts, and the Office of Regional and Bilateral Affairs under OITA oversees collaboration with Mexico on environmental issues along the U.S.-Mexico border, including administering the Border 2020 Program and working with the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) and the North American Development Bank (NADB). The EPA also maintains offices in El Paso and San Diego that provide local support in addressing binational challenges.

The U.S.-Mexico Border 2020 Program is the primary EPA initiative to address environmental issues in that region. A partnership with Mexico's environment ministry, SEMARNAT, the Border 2020 Program was implemented under the 1983 La Paz Agreement, and establishes five environmental goals coupled with specific objectives, achieved through corresponding Bi-National Policy Fora: reduce air pollution, improve access to clean and safe water, promote materials and waste management and clean sites, enhance joint preparedness for environmental response, and compliance assurance and environmental stewardship. The Border 2020 program has established six fundamental strategies that complement and inform the way we achieve the goals and objectives of the program: working to improve Children's Health, building capacity towards Climate Change Resiliency, protecting disadvantaged & underserved communities, promoting

environmental awareness, promoting environmental health, and Strengthening Tribal, State, Federal and International Partnerships. (<http://www.epa.gov/border2020>).

Under a cooperative agreement, the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) and the North American Development Bank (NADB) support sustainable environmental infrastructure projects that improve human health and protect the environment. BECC focuses on the technical, environmental and social aspects of project development through technical assistance, while NADB delivers funding and provides oversight (www.becc.org and www.nadb.org). The BECC and NADB have certified and financed 215 environmental infrastructure projects in the border region since 1995, including water and wastewater treatment, pollution control, and energy efficiency. Some \$2.49 billion has been dispersed for these projects as loans and grants by the NADB (<http://nadb.org/publications/main.asp#>).

The EPA is committed to reducing particulate matter, ozone and other air pollutants by transitioning toward cleaner energy sources, and to reduce solid waste management to improve public health and safety along the border. Progress towards these goals is measured and reported in an environmental indicators reports. In 2020, the next report on the border region will compile data to demonstrate progress on selected indicators, such as reduction of ozone precursors from emission inventories and ozone monitoring data. Region 6's and Region 9's Regional Work Groups also support projects that address issues, challenges and community concerns related to climate change through its two-year action plan.

The EPA has several efforts underway to support programs that identify and reduce the impacts of climate change along the U.S.-Mexico border, while emphasizing community resiliency, specifically to drought and flooding. Given that every major city along the border exceeds or nearly exceeds national ambient air quality standards, mitigating air pollution is a major challenge, while demand for energy continues to increase. Managing solid waste is another priority in a region that has historically lacked infrastructure.

EPA has identified six projects or groups of projects to improve environmental health along the border that the Agency intends to pursue in the next couple of years under the Border 2020 program. The first project area aims to mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by implementing at least three projects to conserve energy by increasing efficiency in homes or schools, pilot waste-to-energy technologies such as methane capture, and promote renewable energy in border communities. The second project area involves training binational emergency responders to prepare for the increase in climate change related severe weather events, such as intense storms, flooding and severe drought. Another project will install at least two ozone or PM 2.5 air quality monitors to collect credible trans-boundary data that will support emissions reductions. The fourth project will implement smog check programs in at least two Mexican border municipalities through vehicle emission inspections, thereby reducing vehicle emissions. The fifth project area will result in the development of at least two bi-national watershed protection plans that identify and reduce sewage, industrial discharges, plastics, trash and sediment entering rivers, in an effort to restore the Tijuana River, New River, Santa Cruz River, and Rio Grande and eliminate

environmental and public health risks. The final project area aims to build solid waste management capacity in the border region by piloting four projects to remove solid waste from canyons and tributaries, and recover recyclables for productive reuse.

The EPA's Border 2020 Program currently supports several initiatives to strengthen climate resiliency:

Improved drinking water and wastewater services: four projects target sustainable infrastructure, reduced operational costs, improved energy efficiency and water conservation, in an effort to adapt to climate change. There are also five binational projects to identify and reduce surface water contamination, while current watershed management and flood mitigation projects include the El Paso Public Service Board's development of storm water infrastructure, initiated in response to 2006 flooding. The International Boundary Water Commission (IBWC) also continues to work on levee segments along the New Mexico-West Texas portion of the Rio Grande.

Best practices and enhanced information sharing: The Border 2020 Program convenes leadership from the National Coordinators Meeting through Policy Fora, Regional Work Groups and Task Forces to foster the sharing of local expertise and knowledge, intrinsic to every project within the two-year action plans and the BECC/NADB, who host workshops on green infrastructure, water reuse and runoff.

Vector-borne disease: Border 2020 partners with public health and sanitation officials from the U.S.–Mexico Border Health Commission (BHC) to develop educational programs that reduce risk of disease transmission, and to train health educators (Promotoras de Salud). An action plan for 2016 is currently in progress.

Transportation and air: seven projects address mobile source emissions and the impacts from trade across the U.S.–Mexico border, five of which target reducing wait times and in turn air emissions at the two busiest ports of entry. Three more projects are funded through public-private partnerships.

Energy: several initiatives build climate resiliency through alternative/renewable energy projects and increased efficiency, impacting the U.S. – Mexico Border. El Paso-Ciudad Juarez metropolitan area. Sludge from Juarez's sewer treatment plant is being used for energy cogeneration. Non-recyclable solid waste is used to generate energy for a cement producer in Chihuahua. A pilot demonstration program has been built at Juarez's Industry Chamber Association building to demonstrate to its members the benefit of energy efficient systems. A solar farm built by El Paso Electric is arrayed to four projects.

Emergency response and preparedness: the current emergency notification mechanisms will be evaluated and updated for local emergency planning committees within four sister cities of New Mexico–West Texas–Chihuahua metropolitan area. El Paso and Ciudad Juarez will carry out a Climate Change and Resilience workshop, aimed at maintaining its designation

as a Climate Resilient City by the Rockefeller Foundation, while training for 250 first responders on how to anticipate and respond to fire, flood, severe storms, heat waves and hazardous waste releases in Northern Sonora, Southern Arizona Baja California and Southern California in 2017 as part of the Border 2020 Arizona-Sonora Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response Task Force meetings. This training will be conducted with binational cooperation, including professionals from federal, state and local agencies.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this input. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Samuel Coleman, P.E.,
Deputy Regional Administrator
coleman.sam@epa.gov
214.665.2100
214.665.3110 Direct
214.789.2016 Cell