

Border 2012 Summary of Comments

BORDER 2012
LAREDO PUBLIC LIBRARY
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GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTION

Miguel Flores - EPA - Dallas
Israel Cantu Silva - SEMARNAT
Margarita Palafox - SEMARNAT
Gina Weber - EPA - Dallas
Steve Neimeyer - TCEQ-Austin

Miguel Flores- I want to welcome you and listen to your concern about environmental problems. I was mentioned as a guest, I am not a guest, I am a native Texan. I receive all the water quality programs, surface water, ground water programs, infrastructure monitoring, assessment, all of these things that are important to the part of life on the US-Mexico Border. I look for solutions that we can together formulate to address the most significant problems, and hopefully you will bring what is on your mind to our attention, so that together we can move forward and provide the quality of life that all citizens deserve. Welcome again.

Israel Cantu - Gina will explain to you the methodology of the Border 2012 Program. I want to remind you that the document you have is a draft and will be enriched with your opinions.

Margarita Palafox- The document you are holding is a draft presenting the EPA, SEMARNAT's and the Ten Border States vision, to give you the main elements we think this program should include, which will be constructed by prioritizing the existing environmental problems of the communities that make up the four Border regions. Which will be constructed by prioritizing of the main communities that conform the four border regions in which the operational structure of the Program has been divided. This region includes: Texas, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. The partners in this Program would like to know what the problems you live daily as citizens of this region, and incorporate them in the document to be able to define strategies to continue their solution. Also, we are working jointly with the Department of Health of both countries. Thank you again. I invite you to share your knowledge with us.

Gina Weber- Good evening, thank you for joining us and we look forward to receiving your comments. I want to remind you that we have simultaneous translation if anybody needs equipment there is interpretation in the back. Feel free to speak in English or Spanish whatever language you prefer. Without your comments we could not have this successful Program, and with them we can only make it better. Thank you.

Steve Neimeyer-Welcome and thank you for letting me be here.

Carlos Rivera - Logistics -We do have a signing sheet on the back, so make sure you sign in. Everybody should have an agenda; we have a public comment form that you can use if you want to submit your comments in writing, a fact sheet, and a document.

Reviewing of Agenda.

VIDEO (12 minutes)

QUESTIONS

Unknown- Looking at the basin water approach, I think you are right on the money there. You have to look at water shed planning and to the extent of how it affects communities. You are not going to protect the Border if you do not deal with water problems. This is only going to happen through public participation and with an inclusive attitude of bringing people together and trying to solve their own problems.

Unknown-We need coordination and a coordinator. We have to take a holistic approach to try to bring about that interaction. There has to be some financing along the way.

Unknown-I would like to expand on this, I can tell you that together with the director of Philips at that time I went to the irrigators and we proposed to them a plan. This was to improve the efficiency of water usage. What we wanted to do is, we were willing to provide funding, to the irrigators to improve their efficiency with whatever equipment they would get. The equal value we would give them in water rights in the city of Laredo. It is going to be through legislation that this is going to happen because there is efficient ways of irrigating, they are just not using them, and they are wasting water. It is ridiculous.

One of my other concerns is air quality in Mexico. There is nobody to analyze the data. Inspection of trucks that come into the United States and also US companies that dispose of their waste in Mexico.

Unknown- Can the agencies try to develop a better understanding of the situations? And within this 2012 Program try to develop some information that would help legislative action. This is something that really should happen.

Unknown-A couple of years ago the city of Roma in Star county purchased some water rights from the irrigation district in Callaway County and with the money they put the water in pipe to save water they had lost through evaporation because we know there is a lot of inefficiencies in those canals. That case was documented, the guy from the company who did it, won National Awards for that. I do not know why not more of that is being done, I guess that what is going to happen is water is going to cost more.

David Negrete Arroyos – President, Rio Bravo International Studies Center in Nuevo Laredo - There are several points I want to make. Border XXI was dealing with indicators

but the truth is that people has a different concept about the quality of the indicators. It has to do with the quality of information we receive from the press. I think we would be better informed if a group would be created in this Program so that people could have access to a more accurate information.

A specific case are maquiladoras, people think maquiladoras pollute, the ones in Nuevo Laredo have pre-treatment there is no direct pollution into the Rio Grande. I can mention plenty of misinformation cases. Ten years ago, Nuevo Laredo was one of the cities along the US Mexico Border that caused a great deal of pollution but as time went by that changed, now Nuevo Laredo is the city that least pollutes the Rio Grande.

Regarding education, Nuevo Laredo is the only city with a landfill at least along the Rio Grande. Even though we have a landfill, people still throw their wastes to the creeks, the river, and empty lots. I think we lack environmental education at pre school, elementary or high school levels. I know if you consider education to be a tool. I think that a group that deals with education should be formed and it should cover the three different levels, water, air, hazardous wastes, etc.

Another problem is pollution to the Rio Grande, there are mines before water gets to Nuevo Laredo, there are natural erosions caused by rain that produces runoff to the river, of toxic substances that are caused by nature. When the water from Amistad dam is released to Falcon according to statistics there is a fifty percent loss in transfer only.

If you have noticed along the Rio Grande there are large amounts of salt cedar, salt cedar consumes an enormous amount of water. In my opinion there is where we loose water. There is also another plant in the lower Rio Grande that also consumes large amounts of water. Maybe the water conservation problems are there. We have to take faster and less bureaucratic actions. We have to distinguish which problems need immediate attention and which ones can wait.

Regarding BECC and NADBank how long will it take for the Projects they are funding to take place? They do not take months, they take years and they have still not solved all the problems. Maybe we need to be simpler and more practical in dealing with these types of problems. Here in Nuevo Laredo, they do not take water from the river for irrigation; the volume of water generated by the treatment plants is sufficient. These are sustainable development efficiency measures. The only tools they need is a transfer channel and a pump. Agriculture is going to disappear if immediate actions are not taken. I know NADBank is supporting the Lower Rio Grande in Chihuahua, but I would like to know, what are they doing for this community of Nuevo Laredo?

Hazardous wastes - if there should be a spill into the Rio Grande, the City of Nuevo Laredo does not have the capability of surviving for hours. What is going to happen with the whole city, where are we going to get water from? We need to be preventive. We do not have a network to stop contamination from a spill. I talk about this border because this is where most of the shipments from Mexico come through to the United States and that is the potential risk we are taking.

Sustainable development; I would want to know what actions are we taking for sustainable development for Nuevo Laredo. Nuevo Laredo's problem is not maquiladoras; it is the vast amount of mechanic and body shops. They comply with the authorities, but nobody picks up used oil for them.

Nuevo Laredo has a first class water treatment plant; I think it is one of the best equipped in the country. The sludge being produced there is being taken to the landfill. I know of some other cities that use this sludge for composting and later for fertilizing. Thank you very much.

Carlos Rivera-Ten minutes extension because we started late.

Steve Neimeyer - I want to thank Engineer Negrete for his comments, it is obvious that he cares, and we need people like you to participate in the regional work groups.

Gina Weber- We'd hate to lose ideas and I am sure you have further issues and ideas, and I think I would encourage to write them down and keep participating, and actually send them so we don't miss comments or issues or concerns the same goes for everybody here as well.

Carlos Rivera -Mr. Negrete already has them written down we would appreciate it if you could give us a copy.

Steve Neimeyer - In the United States can take used oil for recycling as long as it has under a thousand parts per million of hydrogenated solvents and it is not a hazardous waste. Maybe we can set up a program if there is no used oil recycling in that part of Mexico you can bring it over here.

Un known - I want to add three things only. First with the support of Border 2012 to receive support to be able to do a characterization of wastewaters from maquiladoras and industries along the border. Secondly, risk communication, I would like for it to be included in Border 2012. Know how to communicate risk. Third, funding for public health. I have studied the Border XXI document; we have been over it many times. We worked with the integration of a hundred and five indicators in Ciudad Juarez then we went down to fifty-three right now we are at thirty. But my aspiration is that Sister Cities apply at least three.

I have a CD that contains an effort carried out by the Health Department - Environmental Division trying to connect what I told you at the beginning, environment with the epidemiological profile of people and the data I am providing has a first and a last name, the records are fully sustained.

CLOSING REMARKS

Steve Neimeyer- We have until Friday the 22 to submit comments to the EPA's website.

Margarita Palafox- Thank you for your participation. We ask you to please turn in your comments, maybe we will not answer all of them, but experts on each subject will analyze them and will try to provide an answer. Doctor (the last participant) I will make sure that the Department of Health in Mexico City gets a copy as well as the EPA International Affairs Office.

Israel Cantu Silva - I would like to commend you on your questions. EPA and SEMARNAT gathered a lot of information and we will certainly analyze it. Thank you very much for your participation.

Mike Flores- This is the beginning of this Program and it is only through the sharing of your thoughts and your ideas that we are going to get through, particularly on a regional basis. The next time we have some of these meeting bring one or two or three people, so that the more people that we have here the more ideas that we share. We need to focus on solutions.

Carlos Rivera –The final shape of this document is in your hands. We appreciate your participation and we look forward to working with you. We would also like to thank Rosa Maria, the translator back here and the recorder.