

Border 2012 Summary of Comments

BORDER 2012
CITY HALL
MATAMOROS, TAMAULIPAS, MEXICO
November 11, 2002.

Welcome

Introductions: Ricardo Espinosa-Matamoros Municipal Government Secretary.
Jorge Cardenas Gutierrez-General Representative from *SEMARNAT* – Federal Level
Dr. Alfonso Martinez Muñoz-Co- Chair of Tamaulipas-Coahuila-Nuevo Leon-Texas Region, Border 2012 Environmental Program.
Engineer, Lindolfo Duran Estrada- Representing the Governor for the State of Tamaulipas.
Professor, Javier Omar Rodriguez Alarcón – Director, Northern Border Affairs from *SEMARNAT*.
Diana Borja- Director of Border Affairs, *TCEQ*.
Attorney, Margarita Palafox Uribe – Deputy Director, Northern Border Affairs, *SEMARNAT*.
Engineer, Salvador Treviño Garza – General Manager of Municipal Water and Drainage
Dr. Jaime Betancourt Anaya- Director of Municipal Environmental Control
Engineer, Roberto Hernandez Hernandez- Director of the Municipal Planning Institute
Mr. Sheen representing Greg Cook-EPA Region 6

Welcoming address - Ricardo Espinosa Valerio

Program presentation and explanation of the meeting procedures-Dr. Alfonso Martinez Muñoz-Co- Chair of Tamaulipas-Coahuila-Nuevo Texas-Texas Region, Border 2012 Environmental Program.

Brief Program Explanation – Charles Sheen

Three things: there is a new effort from the United States and Mexico that rises from pressures from the past eleven years; second, a new perspective to concrete results with measurable results; and third, a plan which is more open to the local communities, and with much more participation from the public.

Additional comments:

Diana Borja- We need to plan together, because the Border is in the middle of the Region. Projects are going to be implemented at the local, state and federal levels.
Summary and discussion of document- Doctor, Alfonso Martinez Muñoz.

10 minutes for explanations

Questions

Miguel Santos Cortina – Tampico - Proposal: we want to solve the waste problem; we have the capability to solve it. I am talking about coordination between Ecology and Homeland and without cost to anybody. We are agencies at the three levels of government, we are an

institution: Organized Volunteers. We are so far ahead, children are asking us: "When do we start?" This takes technique. We still have the same waste mountains turned into organic and inorganic matter. This is learned the moment we start listening, waste is not natural, is artificial and from the moment we start producing waste in our homes that is when we will not have trash to take out. We are willing to share and go wherever we are asked to, so we can show what we have done so far. We are going to ignite a program so that less and less Mexicans have to migrate to the United States looking for jobs. Leaving families and everything behind. Everything we throw to the trash can be turned into all kinds of money; but we have still to understand. Thank you.

Susana Hurtado from the Technology Institute of Monterrey: - Thank you. On page seven of this document there are objectives established to reduce pollution. On page thirteen actions are stated; are natural resources encompassed in this program? I would like for you to explain please, how do you intend to link these two together? They are both very important to me. I would like you to clarify this issue because natural resources are not mentioned here; and if we are talking about reducing water pollution we have to talk about movable or fixed sources. But it is necessary for this program to make some kind of explanation on how this link is going to be done.

Participation- Comment:-In the Border 2012 Program in the State of Tamaulipas there are only ten states included, not twelve. San Fernando and Jimenez should be included; the other thing is that we need to talk about migrating birds.

Nelly Lopez Vera-NGO – Rio Bravo Municipal Ecology of *Tamaulipecan* Culture – One of the greatest concerns and as a cry for help, I think that I speak for the citizens of the border and we ask that public health be included. The problems of fires in municipal waste dumps; I do not know which municipality can proudly state: "In my municipality there are no fires at the waste dumps." Waste sites consist of everything you can imagine. Why? Because we do not have a recycling system to separate solid municipal waste. This is a concern that should stay with us always and it must also be one at the most important points, because it pollutes soils, it pollutes air, and it harms human health. Furthermore, water is a fundamental liquid that we have to care for and conserve.

José Antonio Mondragón – Director of a Tourist Development (Private Sector)- We see here that you do not include the coasts; this Program includes the sea because we are within the one hundred kilometers. We have marshes, dunes, bird migration, the air; we are not included in this Program. I would like to know what is going to be done regarding this matter? And I would like to participate later during the meeting.

Rafael Silva- The Program has a very important characteristic, it is very concrete regarding the established goals, it is so concrete that we loose track of the funds needed. In other words, if we have such concrete facts, how much investment do we need and where will the money come from?

Javier Omar Explanation-Explanation- The Program being presented today is simply a draft. The purpose of this Binational public meeting taking place along the border is to compile your comments to strengthen the document and give it a definite form and start its instrumentation early in 2003. Regarding coastal environments, and some other problems of each region, the structure of this Program intends to get the priorities from each region or the specific projects to be applied in each one of the border regions. So I think, your comments are of great relevance because they can be included in the activities of the work groups of this region. I would like to add that within the Border 2001-2006 Program of this Department coastal environments are

included. This Program can also be looked up in the *SEMARNAT* web page. Regarding the funds question, which I think is a very good question, we have to look at this Program as a frame of reference, by which we are trying to identify through our partners what are we doing. For example what is EPA doing? What are the Ten States doing? What is *SEMARNAT* doing regarding the environment and natural resources in the border? So what we are looking to do is to find synergies and associations that will allow us to do web defined projects that can ignite concrete environmental benefits. And from there, put numbers to them, establish who is going to give what, how is SEMARNAT, EPA and the Ten States going to contribute. And not only these partners, what we are trying to do now is to see how Binational organizations such as BECC and NAD Bank are going to contribute to finance projects once they are identified in the regional workgroups.

Break – 10 minutes.

VIDEO

One-hour discussion

Andrés Ochoa – Environmental Advisor and Member of the Advisory Board of Environmental Services- I have a comment; flora and fauna are not found in the Border 2012 Program. If they are not included, the Program loses its sustainable development characteristic. Now I have several proposals, to include in the foundation of the Program the decentralization functions of *SEMARNAT* to the States and Municipalities, especially those that represent the Border. The Program states that it deals with important issues, this concept has to be defined; otherwise we would be talking about different issues. There is another element mentioned here: population growth, which is a potential indicator that affects the border, however there is no mention of agencies that deal with this concept. Just take a look at Reynosa to see how it is growing and see that a great number of its problems are due to growth. The document also mentions a local communities focus, however there is an inverse relationship, as we go lower to local communities for population growth, public health, hazardous wastes flora and fauna, transportation; these are not local competencies, so I think decentralization was mentioned. *SEMARNAT* is not included in the contacts. It is said here that there is going to be an increase of 1.5 million people connected, I do not know if it is people, I could not see it web, but if it is households I guess it is fine.

José Antonio Montage – Thank you for the invitation. You know that we have presented to a SEMARNAT a declaration of environmental impact, and we have obtained a favorable response, especially for the building of hotels, villas, condominiums and everything related to tourist activity. Furthermore the conservation of protected areas, specially the marshes, interior waters and wild species habitats, as well as the vast areas destined for tourist use regulated accordingly. We substantiated our proposal at the Municipal Authorization held during the Thirtieth Extraordinary Meeting which took place December 30 of 1997; and we proposed the following specific objectives: first, to open the offering of lots with services for tourist, residential and commercial use. Every week four thousand to eight thousand vehicles with families come to the area for eight months; and this number grows during Holly Week up to seventeen thousand vehicles. Second, organize the stay of one hundred eighty to two hundred families of fishermen that have a seasonal stay in these shores. These families could have new job opportunities in the tourism industry, as well as benefits for their families with the installation of public services and installation of schooling, health centers and food products; and specially diversification of economic activity in the border and the municipality regarding tourism matters. Due to the previously mentioned we also became partners with ECO RED a Corporation of sustainable development technology. The Director of the Company is Engineer, Aurelio Ahumada Rivera, National Ecology Prize in 1997, and a strong candidate for 2003 as well for the development of

Ecological Golf Courses throughout the country Advisor to the President's Office, SEMARNAT and FONATUR, regarding environmental protection. Currently, Mr. Ahumada is developing the third stage of Cancún for the above mentioned Agencies to define environmental Regulations of the Development for the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources that in our region include: marshes, coastal dunes, vegetation in dunes and marshes, the beach, local and migrant birds, air and water. We want to preserve and create the habitat and refuge for birds. We want to elevate ecological functions of marshes, as well as the ecological quality of the site dredging and recuperating depth to allow for larvae entrance for fish and bird development. Regulate fishermen activity for beach clean up. Improve the environment of the site with public services and ecological conservation. Promote fishing as a sport with biodegradable hooks. Installation of advanced treatment and reuse water systems, and potabilization and desalination. In general, to promote an environmental improvement of the border area and its coastal environments through management of ecosystems with sustainable development and a regional model for the protection and preservation of marshes, dunes, beaches and birds. And to conclude, a phrase from our friend and partner, Aurelio Ahumada: "To preserve the business, the business is to preserve".

Good afternoon – If you will allow me, a message from Congressman Roberto Reyes who cannot be here tonight due to job related reasons, but he has great interest in listening to the proposal and to participate also. I am going to read the whole text: I am very pleased to witness the dedication that SEMARNAT jointly with the *EPA* from the United States have destined for the elaboration of the Proposal of the Environmental Program Mexico – U.S. Border 2012. I consider to be of great significance the constituting and implementing of an efficient Binational program that focuses in preventing or reverting ecological degradation of soils, waters, and air in the border areas in both countries. Establishing the building blocks for sustainable development in our communities. I am particularly interested in hazardous wastes of companies that settle in this border area, incineration of trash in open spaces and illegal storing of fuels in improvised or clandestine businesses. I reiterate that we have to comply with security and ecology measures to avoid risks to public health. I suggest sanctions and drastic measures for those who do not comply with such policies, and harm our natural resources; I respectfully ask from the authorities at the three levels, to coordinate a close monitoring regarding this matter. I would also like to add that I sincerely expect positive results from this Binational Program Border 2012. Congressman Roberto Rodriguez Cabazos' signature, President of the Commission for Border Affairs of the State of Tamaulipas. Thank you.

Javier Omar Some-Some of the proposals we are going to include is the vision that we should have in this region; it is precisely related to PEMEX activities in the Burgos Basin. The Basin Burgos is one of the most important activities of natural gas extraction in the country at the moment, and it does have incidence exactly in the region we are dealing with today, management of saline waters, and management of sludges. So, definitely we have followed closely PEMEX's activities because we estimate there are six thousand impacted hectares.

Fernando Elija-I am an environmentalist, from the Technological University of Matamoros- The proposal I have relates to environmental education, a subject not dealt with today. We have worked with groups of water culture here in Matamoros; we have worked incessantly according to National Water Regulations. We need to work like this, with an environmental education that would help us keep a closer look at regulations. Environmental education has to be considered a priority within this project. The second point I wanted to make is, are you taking into consideration the wetlands? Consider them so they can function as they are required by the

region. Work to preserve them, we are working in the United States for the conservation of the wetlands, but here it is obvious, there is no support, there is no budget and this has caused negotiations to come to a halt.

The other thing, I mention it as an environmental issue that has been managed for a long time now. Since the forties decade, where there was a great deal of felling, -without taking into consideration the wind breaker curtains-, Aeolian erosion took place with winds that come from the south east, and where the Palangana Lake and the municipal waste sites are located, all of that erosion reaches Matamoros. It is as if mother nature returns to us the harm we have caused her, it keeps on returning to us a great deal of Aeolian erosion and it continues to harm us. An additional comment I wanted to make is, hazardous municipal wastes, they are mainly produced by industry, but there are municipal wastes managed with no risk at all, without control; and they harm our ecosystem, our habitat. Where does wastewater drainage go? To the Palanquin Lake. That is all.

Alfonso Martinez Muñoz - There is an environmental health section on page seventeen.

Javier Omar Rodriguez- I want to inform you that on Thursday, we met with Secretary of State Public Health, Mr. Hinojosa, to make agreements for environmental education, starting with pre-school first and then with first to third grade at the elementary level and from there to raise it to a regulation level. We have come a long way in that matter, to change the curriculum for teachers which in a way or the other will become very attractive for teachers, so they would earn more salary and be interested in teaching the subject.

Regarding coastal and nearby wetlands, we are clearing up twelve thousand hectares of protected natural federal areas. The publication will come out November 28, the first notification, this is going to be a very important preservation area, and we are working at this also. Regarding monitoring of northern contaminants to the Madre Lake, we are very interested in looking at the established organization through the Tigre (Tiger) Creek as well as the Enduras Canal; these are two flows of hazardous waste, well we do not know whether they are hazardous or not. We have to check sedimentation and the water, and give them a primary treatment so that have a better quality when they reach the Northern part of the Madre Lake and be able to use this water for fishing. I think this covers the three topics.

Julio Ruiz – Surgeon – Basically I am also an environmental advisor for some companies. Speaking about Matamoros we are located in a region a bit difficult, we are in God's grace and in disgrace too, we are the last ones. Since ninety three, ninety four, when the Cuchillo Damn was approved, there was a commitment to build water treatment plants that would send water to the san Juan River and the waters would reach this region for farming. Maybe this Program can help to find funds to be able to finish these water treatment plants.

Secondly, we are at the end of the Bravo River we get everything. And the other problem we have is that what comes out of Matamoros goes to the Lake and we do not have any water treatment plant to avoid that water reaches us as it reaches the Lake. We eat fish from there; we eat oysters and shrimp from there.

And the third topic is the mesquite shrub area, there; population comes and goes with no control at all. They come from the South, they bring a lot of problems from the south, there is no sewage, drinking water; sewage is basic. There are wells that totally pollute the water table and a disease evolves from it. So, I wish, I do not know, if this Program can financially support or find funding to develop this that we have now. We have been trying for ten or twelve years. Administrations and promises come and go, and we remain the same, it is not a matter of politics, is simply an environmental issue. We need to take care of our water and we are not doing it.

With regards to wastes, we have two problems, industrial wastes, we only have one place in all of Mexico to send our Mexican wastes to, it seems unbelievable but that is the way it is.

Secondly, municipal wastes, we cause fires and obviously someone sets the fires or they ignite by themselves due to the amount of chemicals contained in them. But what is the problem? Why don't we look for a different technology to dispose of our wastes? First of all there is paper glass, cardboard and organic matter recycling; why don't we implement the project? In Europe, they are doing it they have incinerators that generate electricity, somebody was talking about regionalizing the waste area of the Bravo River, Reynosa and Matamoros; why not look at this technology? I was speaking to Doctor Humberto, they just installed an incinerator at the plant that is burning waste and it is generating electricity and it does not pollute. Why don't we look into it? Why not look for new technologies? America has to look at Europe's history in regards to the environment. We are ignoring it. They exhausted their water, they are polluted, they had, I think we should utilize the best possible technology available in order to save the water, reach a great number of decisions to be able to reduce pollution; among some of these decisions were the incinerators that most European cities have by now. The incinerators are located in the center of the cities generating electricity and they do not pollute. Why don't we do the same instead of burying our wastes and contaminating the soils? These are maybe new suggestions, but I think the time to promote them is here; we are in the XXI century. We need to reduce land and air pollution; if we do not do so, we are going to have a greater number of problems than what we have now. Thank you.

Alfonso Martinez Muñoz – I would like to mention that I consider the topic you mentioned very significant. The idea is that this project is going to establish investment. One of the most important priorities is wastewater treatment. The workgroups are going to establish priorities and later the Secretary will work with the State governments. (Inaudible)

Javier Omar Rodriguez –There are technologies for solid waste and sewage management, and we are looking at the technology to see if it is viable because we are also dealing with waste waters through plants that are very costly and money is something the country has little of. Wastewaters can be a problem, they can be of benefit for the Madre Lake if we treat them properly, if we treat through bio-regeneration with maple, "tule" and water lily to dissolve solid matter. We could arrive with a very good quality when we reached the Madre Lake and use this water to lower salinity and that could increase productivity. We probably have a problem, but we also have the solution, there is technology to preserve the wetlands through water treatment plants. I think that regarding matter we already have a proposal to submit to the City of Matamoros, as well as the municipalities of the Tapioca urban area; and Madero also so we can treat waters in such a way so it does not involve great amount of money; and probably later would have to be shut down due to inoperability. Also, this might also be a call for people who might want to invest, recycling sludges is lucrative. If there are people from the press here, we want to let people know that we are looking for investors.

I want to comment on The Cascabeles case – people are not informed about hazardous wastes. Basically the problem is that they did not get a permit for transportation.

I would like to speak again. Regarding what my colleague the engineer was saying. We have held some Binational meetings with a Representative from *SEMARNAT*, Mr. Jorge Cardenas. During these meetings, and one of the proposals I would like to repeat is, for establishing community centers for environmental information, diffusion and education for the community in general. It is true, what the Representative says, that there are agreements with *SECUDE* or the *SEP*. But not only for school children, there are more people who have a right to this environmental information, farmers, farming parcels, the community as a whole. I say this because my job, that I love with all my heart, as an environmental biologist and conservationist, is always I found sludges, I am interested in sludges, I reported a Reynosa Company. A

colleague from SEMARNAT told me they did have a permit, but they do not respect those permits, as they should. Supposedly a transference area is for 72 hours and those sludges found there were from 102 hours. I have pictures of when the indictment was being set. They surpassed the limits and there is when run off starts seeps into the water table, and there is where problems start. It is good that treatment exists, but we have to comply with established rules. We have beautiful laws, but we are great at breaking them.

I went to a community center in Pátzcuaro, it is a center for community environmental information; it deals with communication, mobile diffusion supported by SECADESO. I wish all municipalities would establish information centers like this one where everybody could attend, - from the governor's son to the shoeshine boy- everybody should have access to this information. Let them know, if I drop this oil here in my backyard to do away with this anthill, or ancestry knowledge that we sometimes use due to ignorance. Lets educate ourselves, environmental education is fundamental.

Dr. Martinez- For us, it is a nice surprise to have a public meeting for the Border 2012 Program. The Municipal Water Works – which I represent- has been participating since 1998 for all of water is with the same organizations included in this document. But we have not being able to do absolutely nothing. Possibly the lack of expertise on how to do things, where there are no written rules, not in the organization part, but in the operational aspect. *EPA* has invested five million dollars for research for the City of Matamoros, and we have an integral project for drinking water and sewage and we do not even have water treatment plants for the city of Matamoros except the ones for the maquiladoras. And we always say, Matamoros does not have the money. Every time requirements or the rules change and when Matamoros starts complying and we even present the money for the projects that Matamoros has done under this same structure, well it never really happens. I would like to ask you, as a representative of these States, to make Matamoros a project of yours, it is extremely advanced, expected to be certified in 2000, it is now 2002, and 2003 is almost here; apparently it is going to be certified in 2003. I also ask Mr. Sheen to make a plea because it cannot be that a project as comprehensive as this one that the Corporation Montgomery Watson did and cost a great amount of money still has to go through a NIPA process and the document meets the requirements from the city of Matamoros that collapses more and more each day. I would like to insist on the previous comment, regarding natural resources; if we do not have water it is going to be very difficult to repair the city and we are going to have to inject the piping system. It is very important to sep on thinking about paying special attention to natural resources to have them available to meet with those objectives.

We gladly see that the number one priority is water, and the goals for 2005 is to increment that amount so that the population can get water. I present to you this project before this committee to see how we can work with you to establish actions that are well analyzed for Matamoros. The environment is everybody's responsibility here is the money and Matamoros is not certified, we should continue working, we should sep close to the project, but it is imperative that we make a decision.

I would like to say that we recognize there is a lot of information needed from the three government levels in the publishing of the document. There is a significant effort being done to improve the water situation.

Technological Institute of Matamoros- First of all, I would like to thank you for having been invited to this public meeting. The environment is a common responsibility of all the sectors in the community among them the academics. I come from the Technological Institute of Matamoros and we are interested in the involvement of institutions such as *SEMARNAT*, and institutions that we can make agreements with. Up until now we have only made agreements with the municipal administration, but I think it is of great significance to deal with at different levels such as state and federal, so that they can contribute in the environmental area. We have

seen some new tools here in the Border XXI Program. But agreements are not made among Higher Education Institutions. In these Institutions we have, Environmental and Environmental Engineering Programs where the students are interested in ecology issues. I think it is important for them to establish mechanisms to be able to contribute to solve environmental problems. Thank you.

Diana Borja- I do agree on agreements with Universities. We are going through a diplomatic crisis, governments cannot work together as they used to, but Colleges always can. Colleges know about training, there should be decentralization. The Universities work with the mayors and some other public officials and it is easier to work with them than with us State Agencies.

Sr. Diaz Lozano- Architect and Humanist and Representing the Regional Multi-technical Institute of Reynosa. – UIT great pleasure I have looked at this Environmental project Border 2012. I am not aware of the accomplishments of Border XXI but the involved Institutions had another vision. That program involved minimum urban guidelines. I would like to sep them in this Program again and establish which would be the minimum required for the Border to keep on managing this type of environmental issues. Support for water because growth is going to continue like in Reynosa who is going to have great development. Water is going to be determinant to support future development. As part of the Institution I represent, we are asking to be included in this linkage Program and Agreements. We have training and research centers with state of the art technology.

Doctor, Alfonso Martinez Muñoz – Closing remarks.