

BORDER 2012 THREE-STATE REGIONAL WORKGROUP PUBLIC MEETING
November 9, 2006
Santa Teresa Country Club

OPENING REMARKS

Carlos Rincon welcomed everyone and introduced Sunland Park Mayor Ruben Segura to inaugurate the meeting.

Mr. Segura said, on behalf of Sunland Park and South of Dona Ana County, it was a pleasure to have the meeting take place here. He noted the community started as a “colonia”, certainly, Sunland Park has come a long way and wants to be a part of the economic development of the region. However, without infrastructure it can not be done. This Regional Group helps to reach this goal. Right now, Sunland Park is finishing a Waste Water Treatment Plan Project and has submitted it to the BECC for consideration. He mentions the potential of growth for the city. As of now, Sunland Park is the fastest growing community in New Mexico. Some of the current developments include the creation of an entertainment corridor and a border crossing point of entry at Sunland Park-Anapra, but both communities are in much need of infrastructure. A recent study demonstrated the new crossing is vital to promote the private and commercial flow between Juarez-El Paso -Sunland Park. Finally, he asks the group to not forget Sunland Park in their discussions.

CP Maria Eugenia González - SEMARNAT – Mexican Co-Chair.- Introduces the Co-chairs from U.S. and Mexico. Introduces Secretary Ron Curry to say a few words:

Secretary Ron Curry, thanks everyone for being here, especially Mayor Ruben Segura. He states he brings greetings from Gov Richardson, and hopes this will be a very successful meeting.

Introduction of Secretary of Environment and Urban Development of Chihuahua, Marco Quezada who is very grateful for the attendance today.

Ms. Gonzalez apologizes on behalf of Mr. Sam Coleman, the U.S. Federal Co-Chair, who could not be here for the inauguration but will join the meeting shortly. Also, as the representative from the SEMARNAT Chihuahua Delegation, welcomes everyone to the meeting and wishes a very fruitful meeting.

Overview and Goals of the Meeting – Mexican Chair, SEMARNAT

Ms. Gonzalez said she was pleased to be here and mentions the Border 2012 Program helps the communities to raise their concerns and issues about the environment. At the same time she asks for their opinion and suggestions in how to better address these concerns to improve the health and environment of our region. The next six years will give new opportunities to continue the work. We believe the needs of the communities will bring the best options to resolve those issues. This meeting will help to identify the best options/solutions.

Already we have a draft plan to develop on the next six years. The goal of this meeting is to link actions to these goals, identify those actions, set a timeline and measures of results.

Ron Curry reviewed the Environmental Education, West and East Rural Task Force priorities:

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE

- 1) **Conduct community-based workshops, seminars and outreach activities for the purpose of promoting groundwater education and conservation measures.**
 - This priority includes the provision of activities in support of regional wastewater and septic system maintenance and upgrades, as well as educational events focused on groundwater contamination, contamination prevention and remediation. Activities may highlight new federal and state groundwater contamination regulations regarding arsenic, fluoride and radio-nuclides.
- 2) **Work with communities in the region to discuss and educate issues relevant to Environmental Justice.**
- 3) **Expand our existing database of available bilingual educational materials and outreach resources relevant to the Paso del Norte region.**
 - Train educators in the region in the use of these resources and carry out hands-on activities that promote the exchange of information among educators and their students. This priority includes support for GIS and GPS education, outreach, seminars and workshops.

NEW MEXICO – CHIHUAHUA RURAL TASK FORCE

- 1) Reduce particulate matter air pollution
- 2) Improve water quality and promote binational water planning and management for transboundary aquifers in the Task Force region
- 3) Reduce threats to Chihuahuan Desert ecosystems

TEXAS – CHIHUAHUA RURAL TASK FORCE (Tentative pending future meetings with stakeholders)

- 1) Address transboundary water quality issues resulting from invasive species in the Rio Grande.

- 2) Establish projects to improve air quality in the rural areas by addressing one or more of the following: windblown dust from unpaved road; cleared land, dried cattle fecal matter; burning of trash; burning of medical waste; tire fires.
- 3) Reduce solid waste illegal dumping by assessing the lack of service, establish a plan of pick up locations and disposal, encourage environmental stewardship through education and outreach, and/or implementation of recycling programs.

Marco Quezada presented the priorities of the Environmental Health, Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and the Water Task Forces. Mr. Quezada also stated they are making a strong effort to get the environmental issue on the national agenda, it needs funds and other resources. Mr. Quezada shared some statistics with the audience about the environmental status in Juarez highlighting the long way this community has come on environmental issues. In 1995, Juarez provided water service for 90% of the population; 94% of houses were hooked to the sewage system; and the city treated 0% of its used water. In 2006, Juarez covers 98% of the population for water services, the same amount of people has access to the sewage system and 72% of the used water is being treated. The remaining untreated waters will start to be treated in the next two years.

WATER TASK FORCE

1) Planning mechanism for assuring future water supply to provide safe drinking water and to improve wastewater sanitation:

Coordination on water resource management, supported with continuous assessment and characterization of shared water resources, and exchange of compatible data on water source availability for assuring accessibility of water supply of good quality for drinking purpose in agreement with projected population and other productive sectors' economic growth needs, to the year 2012; institutionalizing a procedure for collection, analysis and sharing of harmonized information from data across a wide range of uses of shared water resources.

2) Review runoff design frequency value for extreme natural rainfall such as the one occurring July – August 2006; including assessment of existing dams conditions and reinforcement of weak infrastructure;

3) Preserving quantity and quality of surface and subsurface water supply.

Reduce pollution to water bodies from point and non-point sources including adoption of best management practices by agricultural activities that reduce nutrients, sediments and agrochemical in runoff water; including impacts resulting from invasive species in the Rio Grande and water conservation practices such as use of purple pipe from sewer treatment plants;

JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Carryout cross-border management strategies for air quality improvement throughout the airsheds in the TX-New Mexico-Chihuahua border region and Improve information exchange through existing and new mechanisms

1) Addressing air quality management based on the “One Air Basin “ principle (highest priority)

- Standardizing monitoring, forecasting and data collection and dissemination, joint modeling, and maintaining an emissions inventory

- Harmonizing air quality standards and management / control programs,

2) Comprehensive mobile source emission reductions (high priority)

- Strengthening vehicle inspection and maintenance program that would reduce exposure to toxic gasoline fumes and diesel emissions,

- Aggressive on-road detection, sanctioning and removal of high emitters,

- Standardized fuel emissions reductions programs, furnishing stage I and II vapor recovery at service stations, oxygenated gasoline, ultra low sulfur diesel, retrofit dragged and public transportation fleet engines to combust cleaner fuels,

- Partnering with the Freight and Maquiladora industry, DHS-CBP, and Customs to achieve energy savings that reduce harmful emissions and implementing innovative port management strategies, letting trucks and private cars to move faster at ports of entry,

3) Dust control initiatives

- Reduce open air burning: trash and medical waste, tires, brick kilns, etc.,

4) Synergy with other Task Forces and or other committee efforts:

- Work side by side with the Environmental Health and the Environmental Education Task Forces on broad and effective outreach communiqué for protecting public health by reducing exposure to harmful pollutants of vulnerable population

- Work in conjunction with the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and TCEQ, as the State of Texas pursue re-designation status for El Paso, TX from Non-Attainment status as in attainment for CO and PM, which is happening as we speak, putting together an air quality maintenance plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE

1) Development support for binational surveillance of environmental public health illness,

- Reduce pesticide exposure by training urban - farm pest control workers on pesticide risk and safe handling, extending it to health care provider, lay health workers and promotoras to correctly be able to identify pesticide exposure and how to safely address it.

– Work side by side with the Air Quality and the Environmental Education TFs on broad and effective outreach communiqué for protecting public health by reducing exposure to harmful pollutants of vulnerable population

2) Evaluate means to include gastrointestinal illness into binational disease tracking network, does having a mechanisms to assess changes that may result from actions to improve water and air quality.

3) Establishment of comprehensive health epidemiological surveillance

Ms. Diana Borja, representing TCEQ Commissioner Kathleen White, presented the Land Contamination (Waste), Voluntary Compliance and Assistance; and Emergency Response and Preparedness Task Forces:

Ms. Borja mentioned the State of Texas participates in both the Three-State and the Four-State Regional Work Group. They would like to see some interaction between them. The Rio Grande is the edge of two lands, but also the middle of one region.

LAND CONTAMINATION (WASTE) TASK FORCE

- 1) Develop an inventory of hazardous waste contaminated sites and identify options for waste disposal in border communities,
- 2) Implement a comprehensive binational used tire management plan that will lead to the implementation of best management practices for scrap tires
- 3) Develop a waste minimization and exchange program for Chihuahua with a focus on the manufacturing industry utilizing existing pollution prevention and waste exchanges programs as models respectively.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE & PREPAREDNESS TASK FORCE

- 1) Update existing El Paso – Ciudad Juarez Sister City Agreement by including Section XI that refers to communication mechanisms and coordination in case of an emergency;
- 2) Maintain a region and per jurisdiction when appropriate a Risk Atlas for protecting Paso del Norteans from chemical, biological and natural events
- 3) Perform risk analysis of hazardous chemicals that may pose a threat to local communities.

VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE AND ASSISTANCE TASK FORCE

- 1) Continue increasing voluntary compliance and pollution prevention programs along the Paso del Norte region,
- 2) Re-establish the Binational Environmental Enforcement Task Force in conjunction with the Land Contamination (Waste) Task Force and the Emergency Response & Preparedness Task Force to identify hot spots and to create a collaborate mechanism for addressing threats due to extreme natural events, exposure to accidental chemicals releases and/or acts of terrorism,
- 3) Continue promotion to increase compliance, diminish citizens complaints, promote compliance assistance and enforcement to reduce risk from non-compliant facilities

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

CLOSING REMARKS –

Sam Coleman informs this is the period to have Public Comments and encourages the audience to speak up:

Ma.Eugenia Gonzalez thanks the public and special attendees for their participation.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

1. Alan Rosenberg – Mentions he is impressed with the work done by this group, is encouraging, there are so many good projects but poor funding, he comes from Columbus where there are a lot of water projects, also, they have a small project to treat water and is being charged to people's pocket.
2. Maria Sisneros announces and notes the RFP is open and the deadline to present them is November 20.
3. Lorenzo Arriaga – Water Bureau of Reclamation and Co-leader of the Water Task Force – Asks for comments from both co-chairs for the future of the Program on the federal perspective.
4. Sam Coleman, USEPA– answers the funding issue is always sensitive, EPA's budget for 2007 started in October of 2006 and will end on September 2007. It is his understanding, Both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives have passed some appropriation of funds for projects in the border, there is a difference on amounts in both chambers and it needs to be reconciled. There is some funding included but it is not clear. The Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) is also available for projects. Each entity has a unique process for the appropriation of funds, encourages all to talk to their representatives to learn more and put some pressure on the process. He also stresses out the importance of having the involvement from local officials.

5. Ma. Eugenia Gonzalez from SEMARNAT informs the stakeholders have to submit projects and proposals to start the process, when the decision making took place is informed to the public.
6. Elaine Hubbard – Member of the NM-Chihuahua Rural Task Force – Congratulates the group, is the first program she sees the program asks for rural input, has attended meetings in Ascensión and Janos, thinks is a very good program.
7. Allyson Siwik – Co-leader of the Rural NM-Chihuahua Rural Task Force - Asks both federal (U.S. and Mexico) agencies for funding to have air monitoring in rural areas. Mr. Coleman answers he thinks there is a great challenge because the funding is prioritized within the area, he suggest to take the issue with Air Quality Division and discuss the issue at meetings with New Mexico and Texas, to ensure cooperation from their support staff.
8. Ron Curry – Secretary of Environment in New Mexico – Informs New Mexico has 24 monitor stations within the state, and also 12 mobile stations that travel the state, this allows an opportunity to visit rural areas, will certainly look into visiting the area.
9. Robert foster from New Mexico State University (NMSU) – He submits for consideration the possibility of monitoring wind speed in order to explore the use of windmills for energy purposes.
10. Carlos Rincon, USEPA Border Office Director – First, he wants to take the opportunity to ask the Task Force Leaders to inform the group the dates for the Public Meetings and any help they want to have either from BECC on their logistics and the programmatic from Myriam Cruz; secondly, wants to highlight for those who were unable to attend the National Coordinators Meeting in Ensenada because of the location, he is pleased to announce the next two National Coordinator’s meetings will be located within U.S. EPA Region 6. Next year’s meeting will be around the middle of May 2007.
11. Mr. Sam Coleman announces the Environmental Education Task Force will hold its annual Public Meeting Tuesday, November 14, 2006 at the Instituto Municipal de Investigaciön y Planeación (IMIP) in Circuito Pronaf, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00