

ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY

July 16, 2008

Good Neighbor Environmental Board

Presented by

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WHAT IS THE GNEB?

- The Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB) is an independent federal advisory committee.
- Its mission is to advise the President and Congress of the United States on good neighbor practices along the U.S. border with Mexico.
- Its recommendations are focused on environmental infrastructure needs within the U.S. states contiguous to Mexico.
- GNEB does not carry out any specific border program. Rather its role is to step back as an expert, concerned observer and analyze the big picture when it comes to the problems the border region faces, as well as the opportunities at hand.



WHO ADMINISTERS THE GNEB?

- A presidential executive order delegates implementation authority to the administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- The GNEB operates under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) and meets three times annually at locations along the U.S./Mexico border.



WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE GNEB?

- The Act requires that the board membership include representatives from appropriate U.S. Government agencies; the governments of Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas; and private organizations, including community development, academic, health, environmental, and other non-governmental entities with expertise on environmental and infrastructure problems along the southwest border.



WHAT IS REQUIRED OF THE GNEB?

- GNEB submits its advice to the President and Congress in the form of reports containing recommendations for action. Its first report was published in 1995.
- Since that time, it has continued to provide an objective, consensus-based voice on strategic approaches for addressing U.S.-Mexico border issues.
- Recurring themes in its guidance include the following: focus on areas of greatest need; better integration of existing projects; support new initiatives that provide added value; involve many different organizations early on and throughout the process; and institute an underlying, environmentally sustainable framework as the basis for making decisions



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The Board's recommendations are published in an annual reports distributed throughout the border region as well as to policymakers throughout the nation and Mexico.
- The recommendations are published in newspaper editorial pages and into magazine articles as well as Spanish language television stations.
- More informed public debate, and federal policies that more accurately reflect the concerns of the border region residents.



PROFILE OF US-MEXICO BORDER



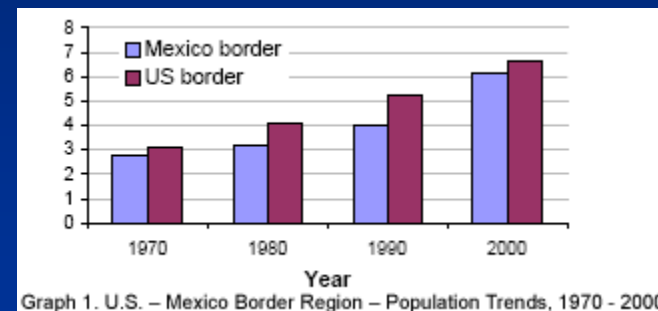
PROFILE OF US-MEXICO BORDER

- International border extends 1,952 miles from Pacific Ocean to Gulf of Mexico.



PROFILE OF US-MEXICO BORDER

- 11 million people live along the border in 4 US States and 7 Mexico States.
- Source: Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática; United States; US Census Bureau, 2000



PROFILE OF US-MEXICO BORDER

- Culture is largely Hispanic along the both sides of the border.



PROFILE OF US-MEXICO BORDER

- There are 26 U.S. federally-recognized Native American tribes in the border region, which range in size from 9 to 17,000 members. Some of these tribes share extensive family and cultural ties to indigenous peoples in the border region of Mexico.



PROFILE OF US-MEXICO BORDER

- Think twin: Nogales, Mexico and Nogales Arizona (1898 -2008). Officially 14 Sister Cities along the U.S. Mexico Border



PROFILE OF US-MEXICO BORDER

- There are 14 Sister Cities that make up the majority of the large Ports-of-Entry, there are 50 in all.



PROFILE OF US-MEXICO BORDER

- Economies are intertwined, Mexico is the US's second largest trading partner; US is Mexico's largest.



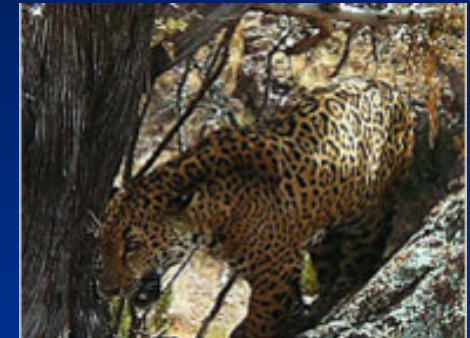
PROFILE OF US-MEXICO BORDER

- Few affluent communities such as San Diego, most are poor.



PROFILE OF US-MEXICO BORDER

- The environment is large and complex (deserts, mountain ranges, rivers, wetlands, estuaries, and shared aquifers); much of it is very fragile.



PROFILE OF US-MEXICO BORDER

- Over 300 million legal crossings occur northbound from Mexico to US per year.
- An estimated 1.1 million illegal immigrants were apprehended along the border with Mexico in 2006; it is unknown how many avoided apprehension.



10th ANNUAL REPORT

- “Environmental Protection and Border Security on the U.S.-Mexico Border”
- Published and presented to the President and Congress in March of 2007



CONFLICTING PRIORITIES



UNDOCUMENTED HUMAN CROSSINGS

- How to address problems associated with unauthorized flows of people across rural areas of the U.S.-Mexico border and continue to protect the environmental quality of the region.



BACKGROUND

- Undocumented migrant crossings has shifted from urban areas to rural areas since the mid-1990s.
 - Operation Hold the Line – El Paso (1993)
 - Operation Gatekeeper – San Diego (1994)
 - Operation Safeguard – Arizona (1995)
 - Operation Rio Grande – Texas (1997)
- These operation included:
 - Deploying more agents at the border
 - Installing security infrastructure such as concrete, bollard-type fences, dual and triple wire or steel fences with patrol roads, buried sensors, 24-hour video surveillance, stadium lighting; and infrared night scopes.



SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE



Foundations of a new wall, part of the triple fence being constructed on the border. Click for large version.
Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.



California National Guard troops working with the Border Patrol near San Ysidro, California. Photo by Roberto Martinez.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT



GNEB RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen communication and collaboration between security agencies and environmental protection agencies, including land management agencies, on both sides of the border.
- Strategically employ a mix of technology and personnel to meet the security and environmental needs of different sections of the border region.



HAZARDOUS MATERIALS CROSSINGS

- How to provide safety and security at ports of entry and beyond, as well as environmental protection from risks associated with the trans border flow of hazardous materials.



BACKGROUND

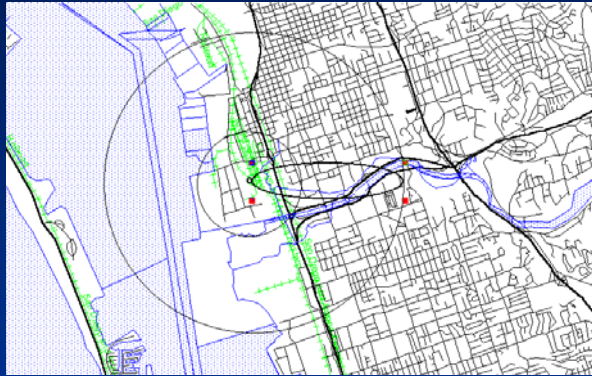
- In contrast to Undocumented Human Crossings,-border security work and environmental protection efforts regarding Hazardous Materials Crossings often dovetail.
- Proper handling of hazardous materials being transported in commercial vehicles near and at official ports of entry is mission relevant to both homeland security and environmental protection.
- Each year, millions of commercial vehicles and trains enter the US from Mexico transporting materials of all descriptions including hazardous materials.
- Some ports of entry (those in California) have more stringent environmental regulations and use state and local resources to assist in identifying hazardous materials and hazardous waste imported from Mexico.
- There is currently no real time tracking for hazardous materials in the border area.
- Cross border emergency preparedness and response is spotty.
- U.S. – Mexico Border 2012 Goal 5 is defined to reduce exposure to chemicals as a result of accidental chemical releases or acts of terrorism.



SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT



GNEB RECOMMENDATIONS

- At ports of entry, increase the number of hazmat inspectors and establish specific sites and hour for hazardous materials vehicles.
- Beyond ports of entry, resolve liability issues for cross-border communities within the larger national strategic plan.



11th ANNUAL REPORT

- “Natural Disasters and the Environment Along the U.S.-Mexico Border”
- Published and presented to the President and Congress in March of 2008



Natural Disasters and the Environment along the U.S.-Mexico Border

- Effects of Natural Disasters on the U.S.-Mexico Border
- Managing Natural Disasters on the U.S.-Mexico Border
- Spotlight on Promising Partnerships



Effects of Natural Disasters on the U.S.-Mexico Border

- Effects on the Region's Environment
 - Earthquakes, landslides, and mudslides
 - Wildfires
 - Tornadoes, hurricanes, and floods
- Effects on the Region's Human Health
- Effects on the Region's Wildlife and Ecosystems



Managing Natural Disasters on the U.S.-Mexico Border

- Emergency Management Cycle
 - Preparedness, Response, Mitigation, Recovery
- United States/Mexico:
 - Federal Role and Agencies to handle domestic issues
 - Federal role and agencies that handle international issues
 - Role of the local government and private sector



Managing Natural Disasters on the U.S.-Mexico Border

- Binalational Arrangements
 - International Boundary and Water Commission
 - Border 2012 Program
 - U.S.-Mexico Inland Joint Contingency Plan
 - Sister City Agreements
 - Binalational State – Level Contingency Plans
 - Informal Binalational Cooperation



Spotlight on Promising Partnerships

- Governmental Partnerships
- University Partnerships
- Multi-Sector Partnerships
- Hurricane/Flood Specific Partnerships
- Earthquake/Wildfire Specific Partnerships



GNEB Recommendations

- Prevent or minimize the impacts of natural disasters through appropriate zoning codes, building codes, landscape requirements, watershed management, and municipal strategic planning
- Build capacity at the local, state, regional, and tribal levels to effectively manage natural disasters, including cross-border coordination
- Better integrate current disparate preparedness and response management systems and practical exercise so as to cover all types of emergencies, including natural disasters
- Expand existing domestic and binational agreements to incorporate U.S.-Mexico border-specific measures related to natural disasters, including measures tailored to specific natural features and human elements



Topic for the 12th Annual Report

- “Innovative Approaches, Including Incentives to Reduce Pollution”

