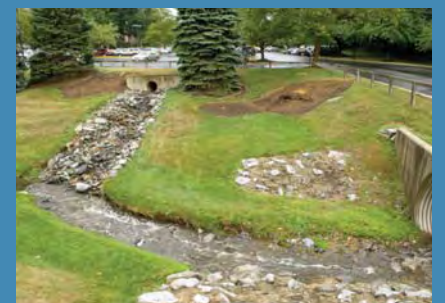


## FY2008 Performance Summary Report

# Water Quality Protection Division Region 6

Protecting and preserving the aquatic ecosystems and water resources of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Tribal lands within Region 6





EPA Region 6 has a diverse workforce dedicated to these collective values, and we base our practices and decisions on them.

### **Workforce Diversity**

- We value a diverse workforce in which each person strengthens our ability to achieve our goals.
- We strive to hire, develop, and maintain a workforce that represents diverse backgrounds.
- We utilize cross-cultural skills in communication and problem-solving, and promote open dialogue and education to perform successfully in our diverse environment.
- We interact with the constituencies we serve in a way that demonstrates an understanding of their cultural values.

### **Environmental Stewardship**

- We carry out the public trust in protecting human health and the environment.
- We work as a team to clean the air, restore and protect water, recycle and renew polluted land, and help protect the security of America.
- We work in partnership with States, Tribes, local communities, and vulnerable populations to carry out our mission.
- We are committed to reducing our environmental footprint.

### **Character**

- We have integrity and exhibit ethical behavior in all that we do.
- We are committed to making good decisions, even if it is not easy, expedient, or popular.
- We walk the talk and set a good example.
- We are honest and trustworthy - we don't betray trust and confidentiality.

### **Accountability**

- We accept responsibility for all we do, both positive and negative.
- We hold each other accountable, and give feedback to each other.
- We take initiative to do what needs to be done, and step forward to lead when needed.
- We learn from mistakes, problems, and other situations.
- We communicate openly, invite feedback, and listen.

### **Respect**

- We treat each other with consideration and dignity.
- We act without prejudice or favoritism.
- We show respect regardless of level, title, position or agency.
- We do not tolerate discrimination or demeaning remarks by others.

### **Excellence**

- We strive to be the best we can be, and are committed to continuous improvement through innovation and sound science.
- We lead by thinking strategically, communicating openly, and working collaboratively both internally and with States, Tribes, local communities, and other partners.
- We provide high-quality service to our internal and external customers.
- We make the best of difficult situations, and avoid complaining and making excuses.
- We support and are open to new ideas or concepts.



## Message from the Director

Dear Colleagues, Friends and Partners,

It gives me great pleasure to share with you our EPA Region 6 Water Quality Protection Division's (WQPD) Fiscal Year 2008 (FY08) Performance Summary Report. We made tremendous strides in several significant areas and also maintained the national lead on the number of permits current under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program. The Region achieved and maintained a permit issuance rate of 97%, the highest in the nation, exceeding the national goal of 90%.

Thanks to the talented and dedicated WQPD staff and the leadership of our State partners in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas, as well as our Tribal partners, Region 6 achieved its best performance on record under the National Water Program Guidance (NWP) for FY08. This year's achievements placed Region 6 among the top four Regions in the nation.

The Region also took great steps to continue building new and nurturing existing partnerships with academic institutions, government agencies and community organizations to promote environmental stewardship, accountability, excellence and workforce diversity. This report highlights many of the environmental initiatives undertaken in collaboration with our partners.

Looking ahead, the Division has undertaken some new initiatives to position itself better to meet some of the challenges we will face in the future primarily due to climate change impacts to water quality and quantity and carbon sequestration. We will continue our collaborative efforts with our partners to improve core programs and emphasize watershed approaches to water quality management.

If you would like to obtain an electronic copy of this report, you may download it at [www.epa.gov/region6/water](http://www.epa.gov/region6/water).

**Miguel I. Flores**, Director  
Water Quality Protection Division, EPA Region 6

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# Region 6 Water Quality Protection Division

## Mission and Vision

The mission of EPA is to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment – air, water, and land – upon which life depends. Working in partnership with States, Tribes and other stakeholders, EPA implements numerous statutory programs established by Congress to protect and preserve our natural ecosystems and the life they sustain. In particular, the Water Quality Protection Division of EPA Region 6 focuses its resources on protecting and preserving the aquatic ecosystems and water resources of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas, as well as the Tribal lands located within our Region.



*EPA Region 6 serves the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas and 65 tribes.*



Our vision is to provide leadership and assistance to support protection and restoration efforts so that all waters in Region 6 meet all designated uses, and all citizens have access to safe drinking water.



## About the Water Quality Protection Division

### Organization and Leadership

Miguel I. Flores, Director

William K. (Bill) Honker, Deputy Director

**The Water Quality Protection Division (WQPD)** is staffed by more than 160 employees. The Division is managed by the Director, Deputy Director and five Associate Directors that provide oversight of the water programs in Region 6. The WQPD communicates EPA's National and Regional operating guidance to the States and Tribes and assists them in developing comprehensive water programs through Federal funding and technical assistance. With these and other resources, States develop the capability to assume Federal water programs through delegation agreements. Technical and financial assistance is also provided to local agencies and Indian Tribes.

The regional water programs managed by the WQPD include water quality planning, public water supply, groundwater protection, State revolving funds, wastewater infrastructure activities for the U.S.-Mexico Border program and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) oversight, to name just a few. These and other programs are managed by the following five branches:

#### Assistance Programs Branch

Susan Spalding, Associate Director

Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) Programs, State and Tribal Water Quality Grant Programs, Wetland Program Development Grants, U.S.-Mexico Border Environmental Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) Program, Performance Partnership Agreements and Grants

#### Ecosystems Protection Branch

Jane Watson, Associate Director

Water Quality Standards, Monitoring and Assessment, Nonpoint Source Program, Marine & Wetlands Programs, Coastal and National Estuary Programs, Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Program

#### NPDES Permits & TMDLs Branch

Claudia Hosch, Associate Director

NPDES Permits Program, TMDLs Program, Stormwater Program, Green Infrastructure

#### Planning and Analysis Branch

James R. Brown, Associate Director

Strategic Planning, Tracking of National Water Program's Program Activity Measures, Partnerships and Communications, Geographic Information Systems, Climate Change, Water Conservation Initiatives

#### Source Water Protection Branch

Larry Wright, Associate Director

Public Water Supply Program, Underground Injection Control (UIC) Program, Sole Source Aquifers, Tribal Drinking Water and UIC Programs, Ground Water Center

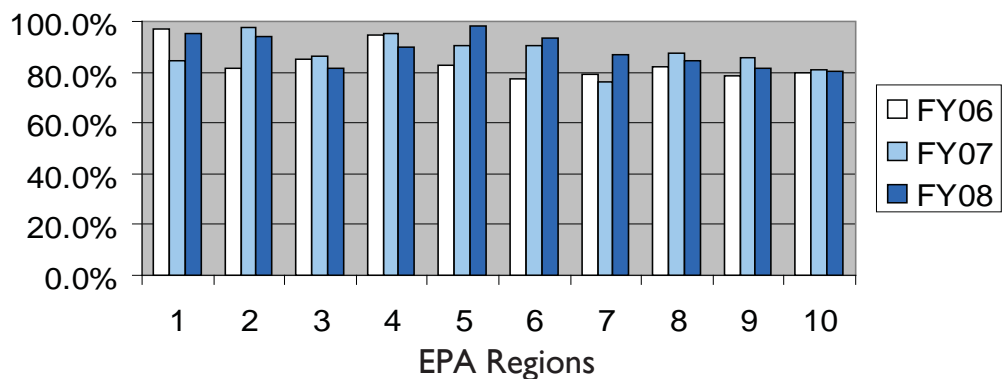
# Summary Of Water Program Accomplishments

## Performance Measurement Summary



The Water Quality Protection Division (WQPD) turned in its best performance on record under the National Water Program Guidance (NWPG) during FY2008. Region 6 achieved its targets in 43 of 46 commitments for an overall success rate of 93.5%. The FY2008 success rate improved upon last year's 90% performance, which also placed Region 6 among the top four Regions. This year we narrowly missed Strategic Target SP-1 - the percent of community water systems providing drinking water that meets all applicable health-based drinking water standards - by just 0.2% (87% commitment; 86.8% result). Nevertheless, this fine performance is the result of the efforts of our State and Tribal partners and the Division for which all managers and staff can take pride.

Percent of Commitments Achieved by EPA Regions FY06 through FY08



Seven of the measures tracked under the NWPG are known as Senior Management Measures. They are considered to be the top echelon of measures and used to gage the overall performance of Senior Executives in EPA Regional Offices. WQPD met or significantly exceeded all of its commitments for the Senior Management Measures. To more effectively track progress and measure results made under grants to States, twenty-seven measures in the NWPG were deemed "State grant template measures" in FY08. The Public Water Supply Supervision, UIC, Beaches, Nonpoint Source, and Clean Water program grants report on these measures at the end of each grant's performance period to ensure federal assistance agreements to States are aligned with the Agency's strategic goals and objectives, and that measurable results can be linked to State grant activities. All but two of the 27 State Grant Template Measures were met.



Wetland in Louisiana  
Photo: Tina Hendon, EPA Region 6

# Financing Environmental Improvements

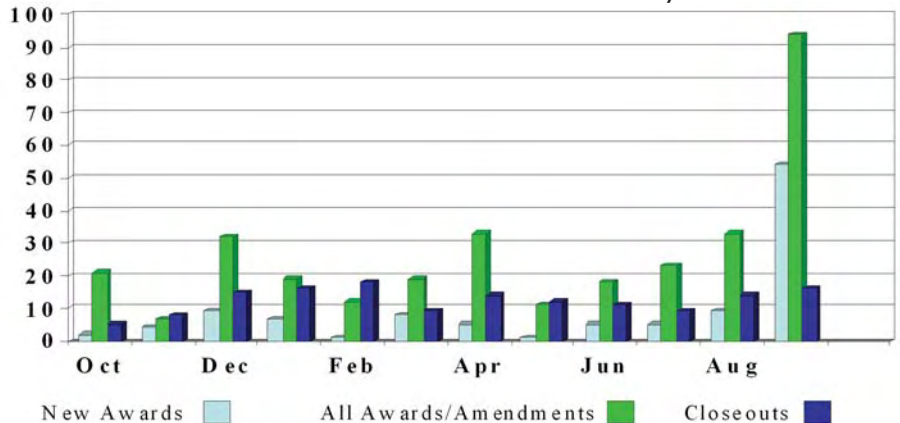
## Assistance Programs Branch



### Introduction

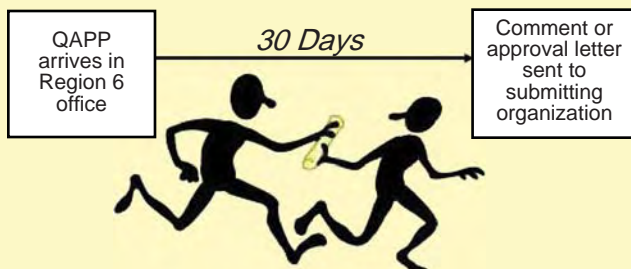
The Assistance Programs Branch annually awards and manages over 80% of all the grant dollars awarded by the Region to States, tribes, local governments, non-profits, and other partners to achieve environmental goals. During this year, the Branch was responsible for managing just under \$2 billion in over 500 assistance agreements. This includes over \$300 million in new funding for FY 08. There were 110 new assistance agreements awarded; 147 were closed out, and 212 amendments were processed.

Division Grant Actions in FY 2008 - Monthly Totals



### Improving the Quality Assurance Review Process

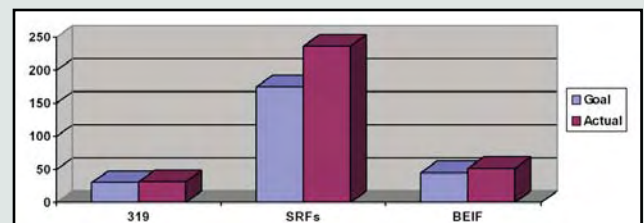
Expedient review of Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) is a top regional priority. EPA requires any financial assistance recipient using awarded funds for environmental monitoring to prepare QAPPs. In response, EPA is committed to providing comments on these plans within 30 days of receipt. This year the Branch strengthened the review procedures through the development of a reference document for Project Officers, the QAPP Review Handbook, and through enhancement of the Branch Reporting and Tracking System (BRATS) which now includes additional data fields for QAPP tracking. Tracking QAPP review status in BRATS is an essential component of the Water Quality Protection Division's efforts to meet the Agency's timeliness commitments.



### Reducing Unliquidated Obligations

The assistance programs which fund water and wastewater infrastructure and nonpoint source implementation have the largest number of Unliquidated Obligations (ULO) in the Region. ULOs are Federal funds which EPA has awarded to assistance recipients (typically States), but have not yet been spent by those recipients. EPA's financial management office has set ambitious Agency-wide performance goals aimed at reducing ULO's.

The Branch is leading a very successful implementation of the Water Quality Protection Division's ULO Reduction Strategy. In FY 08, the Branch exceeded ULO expenditure goals for the infrastructure and nonpoint source programs by 27%. Total expenditures in these programs exceeded \$317 million.



319 - Exceeded expenditure goal of \$30M by disbursing \$31.3M  
 SRFs - Exceeded expenditure goal of \$175 by disbursing \$236.6M  
 BEIF - Exceeded expenditure goal of \$45M by disbursing \$51.7M

## Drinking Water and Wastewater Connections: Goal Exceeded on the U.S.-Mexico Border



San Benito Wastewater Treatment Plant  
Photos: José Rodríguez, EPA Region 6

The U.S.-Mexico Environmental Program (Border 2012) is a collaboration between the United States and Mexico to improve the environment and protect the health of the nearly 12 million people living along the border. One of the program's goals is to achieve a 25% increase from the 2003 baseline in the number of homes connected to potable water supply and wastewater collection and treatment systems by 2012.



In FY08, the number of new wastewater connections completed was 31,686. The U.S.-Mexico Border Program has currently achieved 78% of its Border 2012 wastewater connections goal and will exceed the goal in FY09. The Program also completed 5,162 new drinking water connections. With these connections, the Program has now exceeded its Border 2012 goal of 24,629 drinking water connections by 17%.

excellence



### Award Winning Improvements in Indirect Procurement

In September 2008, EPA's Office of Small Business Programs selected Region 6's State Revolving Fund (SRF) Team to receive the Administrator's Award for Outstanding Indirect Procurement Program Achievement. The award honors their proactive efforts toward improving Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) and Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) participation in Region 6 State SRF recipient agencies. The award was announced in FY08, but honored the FY07 record accomplishment of \$24 Million awarded to MBE/WBE firms which represented 39% of the SRF grant awards for FY07, far exceeding the agency goal of 8%.

photo: EPA



From left to right: Javier Ballí, Dianne Sales, Margaret Osbourne, Susan Spalding, Maurice Rawls, Miguel Flores, Miriam Fisher-Hadley, Velma Smith and Susanne Mann (not pictured: Tyrone Hoskins)

### Clean Water State Revolving Fund Roundtable Meeting

On June 24, 2008, Region 6 hosted one of the national "roundtable" workshops sponsored by EPA's Office of Wastewater Management to promote creative approaches in using Clean Water State Revolving Funds (CWSRF) for enhanced watershed management activities and additional focus on public health issues.

The Assistance Programs Branch's CWSRF Team worked with HQ and its contractor to organize the Region 6 meeting. Over forty people, representing a wide variety of EPA programs (such as Superfund and National Estuary Programs), attended the workshop. State representatives participated via teleconference.

### Tribe Approved for Treatment As A State

The Citizen Potawatomi Nation's application for "Treatment as a State" for the Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 106 Program was approved on August 19, 2008. This approval gives the tribe authority to receive Federal funding for activities supporting the prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution.

### Tribal Workshops For Improved Sampling Methods

The Osage Nation collaborated with Region 6 and the U.S. Geological Survey in FY08 to provide three workshops entitled "Introduction to Field Water Quality Methods for the Tribes of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6." The workshops emphasized clean sampling protocols for metals collection and analysis in surface water and also addressed field preparation, water monitoring, integrated-flow techniques, and discharge and field measurements. Practical knowledge and hands-on experience gained at the workshop have enabled the Tribal participants to utilize comparable and consistent sampling methods, enhancing the quality assurance of their data.





photo: Charlie Speikerman, Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program

# Watershed Restoration and Ecosystem Protection

## Ecosystems Protection Branch

### partnership

#### Improving Water Quality through Federal-State Partnerships

Slow-moving waterbodies in Louisiana have long raised concerns about their naturally-occurring low levels of dissolved oxygen. Efforts to address this longstanding problem have been stymied by differences between the manner in which EPA and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) developed water quality criteria for these waterbodies in the past. However, significant progress was made beginning in July 2007 when EPA and LDEQ partnered to develop a protocol and timeline for state-wide, ecoregion-based dissolved oxygen criteria. In January 2008, months of intensive planning culminated in the completion of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) which describes how least-disturbed reference conditions are to be identified and used to represent attainable water quality in the state. As a result, LDEQ proposed new dissolved oxygen criteria in October for portions of southern Louisiana, the first project to be implemented under the new MOA.



Swamp and canal along Grand River, Louisiana  
photo: Tina Hendon, EPA Region 6

#### Enforcement Action Leads to Restoration



Property before restoration

While exceeding for the fourth consecutive year its annual goal of 20 wetlands enforcement actions against violators of the Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404, EPA succeeded in obtaining a Consent Agreement and Final Order for a significant violation against a sugarcane operation in Iberia Parish, Louisiana. The violation consisted of illegal land clearing, leveling of tidally-influenced wetlands, levee construction, and culvert installation on 239 acres of wetlands. The enforcement action compelled the company to restore the 239 acres of wetlands impacted by the illegal fill activities and to pay a \$150,000 fine, the largest administrative penalty assessed by Region 6 for a wetlands case.



Property after restoration

photos: Matt Conn, John Chance Land Surveys, Inc., Lafayette, LA

#### Clean Water Act Jurisdiction Determinations after Rapanos



Unauthorized fill in an unnamed tributary to the Animas River, Aztec, NM  
photo: Tom Nystrom, EPA Region 6

The CWA Section 404 requires permits for the discharge of fill materials to waterbodies protected by federal law. In June 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision in the case of *United States v. Rapanos* that wetlands and streams that are not hydrologically connected to navigable waters are not subject to requirements of the CWA. Implementation of this decision is particularly challenging in arid areas such as New Mexico where 90% of the stream miles flow intermittently throughout the year. As a result of the Rapanos decision, EPA and the Corps of Engineer's district office in Albuquerque stopped regulating fill activities in dry arroyos lacking a connection to navigable waters. However, the two agencies continued their practice of conducting an analysis to determine connectivity by evaluating the ability of a wetland or stream to carry and filter pollutants downstream and store floodwaters. Mutual agreement on this approach has resulted in the protection of a significant number of acres of wetlands and miles of stream corridors in New Mexico's arid landscape.

innovation



### Progress Through Innovation

Construction of the Lake Borgne Shoreline Protection project, funded by the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) and begun in October 2007, was completed in December 2008. EPA worked in partnership with Louisiana's Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration to design and construct the \$25 million project in St. Bernard Parish to protect the fragile wetlands along the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet and the rim of Lake Borgne from further erosion over the next 20 years. The two major components of the project include placement of a unique, back-to-back steel sheetpile structure (never previously implemented in CWPPRA projects) at Bayou Dupre and a stone dike along the lake's shoreline at Shell Beach and near the bayou. A seldom used technique referred to as "end-on" construction was utilized to place a portion of the rock dike. The steel sheetpile at Bayou Dupre and most of the rock dike performed well against the high winds, waves, and water of both hurricanes, Gustav and Ike. These innovative techniques could prove useful in the design and construction of future CWPPRA projects to bolster protection and restoration of coastal wetlands.



Steel sheetpile structure placed at Bayou Dupre



Rock shoreline protection placed along Lake Borgne

photos: Patricia Taylor, EPA Region 6

### EPA-State Action to Protect Public Health

The Clean Water Act requires that states assess their water quality data every two years to determine if waterbodies are safe for swimming and recreation.

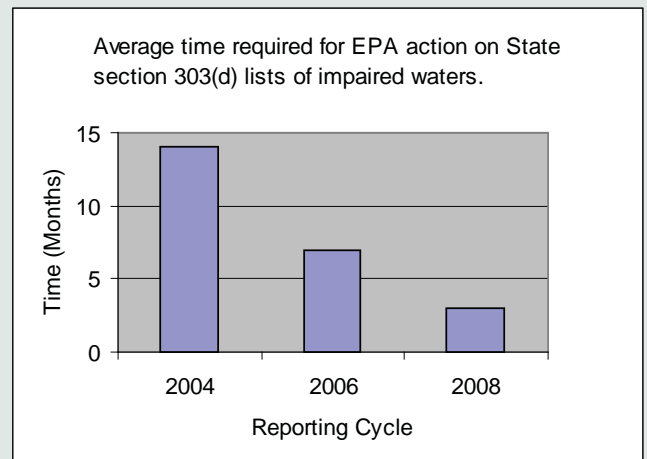


Texas Beach Watch Program helps EPA protect communities. photo: Barbara Keeler, EPA Region 6

The states are required to prepare a so-called "303(d) list" of waters not meeting water quality standards for their intended use. In Texas, EPA reviews that list in coordination with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). In its 2008 review, EPA asked that TCEQ consider bacteria data collected by the Texas Beach Watch Program administered by the Texas General Land Office (GLO). The GLO routinely samples the water at popular beaches in the state and notifies the public when results indicate swimming may pose a health risk. EPA and TCEQ analyzed GLO's data and found that bacteria densities exceeded water quality criteria at Cole Park and Ropes Park in Corpus Christi. Based on this finding, EPA added these beach areas to the state's 2008 list, which will encourage the state and local governments to take the necessary actions to reduce bacteria loads at these beaches, reducing health risks associated with swimming in those waters.

### Improvements in EPA-State Review Process Encourage Action on Contaminated Waterbodies

The CWA requires EPA to review and either approve or disapprove state 303(d) lists of impaired waterbodies every two years. The law also specifies that the review process be completed within 30 days from the time a state submits its list for EPA action, although historically, this process has taken much longer. Past delays were attributed to insufficiently documented or non-standard State submittals, decisions that EPA found technically unacceptable or inconsistent with standards, and surprises when draft reports were not initially shared with EPA. Within EPA, delays were attributed to competing priorities, lack of an automated electronic review system, legal reviews, and management concerns about final actions. Since 2005, EPA has worked closely with its partners in the five states in Region 6 to streamline and automate the process, significantly reducing the time required for EPA actions from approximately 14 months in 2004 to less than three months in 2008. EPA and the states are poised to continue making progress through the next biennial reporting cycle in 2010. Reducing the time required for EPA actions on the 303(d) lists enables states to take more timely actions to correct water quality problems through the regulatory framework and funding mechanisms authorized by the CWA.



graph: Charlie Howell, EPA Region 6

## Collaborative Efforts Restore Beloved Louisiana River

For 20 years, the upper and lower reaches of the Tangipahoa River in Louisiana remained contaminated with high bacteria (fecal coliform) and sediment loads, low dissolved oxygen, mercury, and other agri-chemicals, threatening public health and the environment. Cleanup of the 79-mile river that runs through the state into Lake Pontchartrain eluded government and non-government agencies throughout the years because of the difficulty of controlling runoff of wastes from the two major non-point sources of the pollution, the numerous residential sewage systems and the 250 dairy farms in the watershed. This prompted the

photo: Beverly Ethridge, EPA Region 6



Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation has worked to train sewer operators to reduce discharges from lagoons and small package plants.

LDEQ in 2000 to list the two reaches of the river on the state's 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies. In ensuing years, a broad range of local, state, and federal government and non-governmental agencies such as the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, worked collaboratively with local dairy and sewer operators to design, fund, and implement a long-term watershed management

plan. Data has shown that the plan has been effective in improving water quality in both the lower and upper reaches of the river. As a result, LDEQ proposed removing these segments of the river from the state's 2008 list for fecal coliform. The entire river now safely supports its intended recreational, public uses. This achievement has been recognized as one of the Agency's success stories.

## National Estuary Programs Hold Back the Sea

**EFFECTIVE**  
NEPs and their partners have protected and restored over 1 million acres of habitat since 2000

**EFFICIENT**  
For every dollar provided by EPA, NEPs have leveraged \$16.50

**COLLABORATIVE**  
NEPs foster consensus-based decision-making and build strong private and public partnerships

**ADAPTABLE**  
The NEP approach can be transferred to other community-based organizations and efforts, and is responsive to emerging issues

Facing some of the highest rates of coastal land loss in the country, the three EPA National Estuary Programs (NEPs) in Region 6 worked with a host of partners to protect and restore 3,600 acres of coastal habitat at risk from development, subsidence, erosion, and sea level rise. One of the two NEPs located in Texas, the Galveston Bay Estuary Program, and its partners completed the North Deer Island Restoration and Protection Project, protecting tidal flats, lagoons, and wetlands on an island used by as many as 30,000 pairs of nesting birds. The large team implementing this project was the recipient of the Gulf Guardian Partnership Award for 2008. Further south along the Texas coast, the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program (CBBEP) continued to increase its coastal land holdings, receiving title to a 54-acre barrier island wetland property on Mustang Island. The Nueces Delta Preserve, the gem of the CBBEP, is made up of 5,000 acres of estuarine land owned and managed by the NEP for conservation. This year, another 75-acre property was added to the

Preserve. Finally, the Barataria-Terrebonne NEP in Louisiana worked with an expansive group of business and agency partners to provide technical assistance for a diverse group of projects to create salt marsh habitat with dredged material, protect shoreline habitat, and rebuild barrier islands.

### partnership

## Federal-State-Local Partnership Yields Environmental and Public Health Benefits

Unsafe levels of polychlorinated biphenyls and the pesticides chlordane, DDT, and dieldrin in fish from Lake Como near Ft. Worth, Texas led the state to ban the possession of fish from the lake in 1995. A year later, the state noted the lake's impaired designated fish consumption use by adding it to the state's 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies. Through a collaborative effort among EPA, the U.S. Geological Survey, TCEQ, Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), the city's Environmental Management Department, and local citizens, best management practices were designed, funded, and implemented to address the water quality problem which led to the contamination of the fish in the lake. As a result of its fish tissue sampling efforts, DSHS adopted a revised health risk assessment protocol to improve existing safeguards for public health. TCEQ has since determined that Lake Como is in compliance with relevant federal water quality criteria for fish consumption use, prompting it to remove the lake from the state's 2008 303(d) list. Restoration of Lake Como has also been featured by EPA Headquarters as one of the Agency's success stories.

# Protecting Surface Water

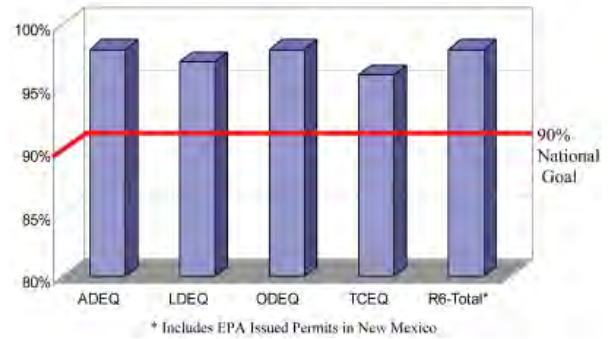
## NPDES Permits and TMDLs Branch



### Largest Percentage of Current Permits in the Nation

EPA Region 6 leads the country in the number of discharge permits that are current. In FY08, the NPDES and TMDLs Branch achieved and maintained a permit issuance rate of 97%, the highest in the Nation, exceeding the National goal of 90%. Region 6 also regulates the largest permitting universe in the Nation, with approximately 26,900 industrial and municipal wastewater discharges, which represents 25% of the universe in the United States.

NPDES Permits Issued by Region 6 States (Percent Current)



### The importance of current permits...

The percentage of permits that are current is one of the critical measures in assessing the success of the NPDES permitting program. This goal is measured as the number of facilities (major and minor) covered by individual and non-stormwater general permits. Permits that are not issued in a timely manner could result in the delay of necessary controls to reduce the discharge of pollutants. As more facilities become more complex, it has become crucial to implement revised or newly adopted water quality standards and effluent national guidelines into NPDES permits.



photos: EPA



photo: EPA

### Bacteria Limits in Permits for Domestic Wastewater Facilities in Texas

At the beginning of FY08, Texas was considering alternative approaches for imposing bacteria effluent limits and monitoring requirements in all domestic wastewater permits. Out of 649 Texas water body assessment units (AUs) listed as impaired on Texas' 2008 303(d) list, 402 AUs or 62% are listed as impaired for bacteria. Throughout the first several months of the year, the Branch coordinated closely with TCEQ to refocus its surrogate parameter-based approach to bacteria controls, and to ensure that discharges from these facilities meet Texas' bacteria water quality standards, which are especially important given the significant number of Texas water bodies listed as impaired for bacteria.

In July 2008, TCEQ submitted its plan to make necessary revisions to its procedures, and include appropriate bacteria limitations and monitoring requirements in all domestic wastewater permits by January 1, 2010. TCEQ has begun implementing the interim requirements for bacteria included in their plan.

## Whole Effluent Toxicity

In 2005, Region 6 launched a whole effluent toxicity (WET) initiative aimed at bringing NPDES permit requirements into full compliance with existing federal regulations and State water quality standards. The primary focus of this effort is for States to determine whether discharges have the reasonable potential to exceed a State water quality standard and, where such potential is present, to include WET limits in permits based on reasonable potential for either lethal or sub-lethal toxic effects to the test organisms.

Region 6 developed a permitting procedure to address WET requirements and in 2005 began issuing permits in New Mexico under that procedure. In FY08, two of the remaining four States in Region 6 also instituted appropriate WET permitting procedures: Louisiana and Arkansas. Currently, we are continuing to work with Oklahoma and Texas as they consider changes of their procedures.



reduction in the testing frequency may be granted in the permit.

Above: *Daphnia magna*  
(Water Flea)  
Right: *Pimephales promelas*  
(Fathead Minnow)

### About WET testing...

Whole effluent toxicity (WET) testing ensures that waste water discharges from point sources are not toxic to sensitive aquatic life. This testing is required of all major waste water dischargers with permits issued under the NPDES in EPA Region 6. Testing is usually done for two aquatic species. If the effluent does not demonstrate toxicity, a



## Convening Stakeholders

### 24th Annual Region 6 Pretreatment Workshop

During FY08, in conjunction with the Region 6 Pretreatment Association, the Branch hosted the 24th Annual Region 6 Pretreatment Workshop and continued its legacy of not only conveying important programmatic information, but providing a venue for networking among Pretreatment personnel in the Region. This is one of the most successful and longest running workshops of its kind in the Nation, and continues to draw participants because of its nationally recognized speakers and commitment to addressing current issues within the Pretreatment community.

### 10th Annual EPA Region 6 Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Operator's Conference

In partnership with the City of Waco, Texas, the Branch hosted its 10th Annual EPA Region 6 Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Operator's Conference in Waco, Texas. Region 6 is proud of this decade-old tradition of bringing municipal, state, federal, and private storm water quality management professionals together to share information and experiences. The primary purpose of the conference is to help foster more efficient and effective storm water management programs, while avoiding the costs of re-inventing the wheel or repeating mistakes others have already learned to prevent from experience. This well received forum attracts 250-300 attendees each year from not only Region 6 states, but from across the nation. In 2009, the conference will be held on June 22-25 in Houston, Texas.

### 2008 National Section 303(d) Listing /Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Program Meeting

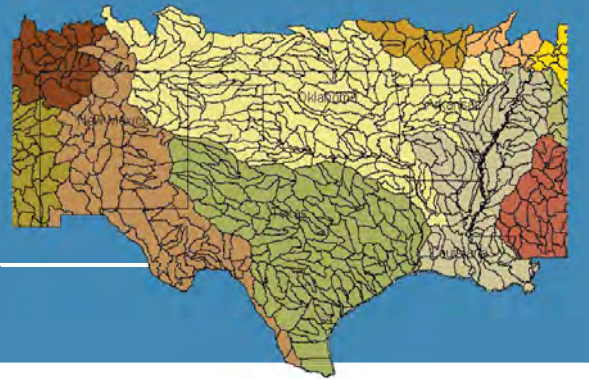
The NPDES Permits and TMDL Branch led the Region's efforts in hosting the 2008 National Section 303(d) Listing /Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Program Meeting in Austin, Texas. A total of 80 people from the ten EPA Regions and EPA Headquarters attended the workshop to develop practical and applied solutions to complex TMDL and listing issues; exchange expertise; update technical/policy information; and facilitate coordination. This was the first time for Region 6 to host this important national meeting.

### International Partnership to Address Water Quality Concerns Along the U.S.-Mexico Border

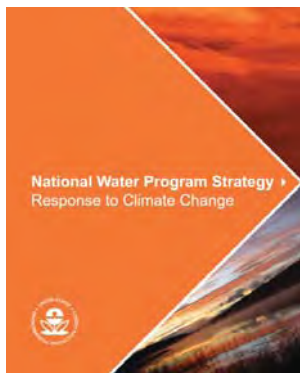
During FY 08, Region 6 expanded its collaboration with TCEQ and with Mexican government officials to develop plans for establishing a TMDL for segments of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo River. The beginning of a multi-year project, this effort may ultimately lead to the first bi-national TMDL in the Region.

# Strategic Planning and Community Outreach

## Planning and Analysis Branch



In line with EPA’s goal of promoting an ethic of improving water use practices to increase efficiency, eliminate waste and conserve water resources, the Planning and Analysis Branch continues to provide leadership and innovation in several regional and national initiatives by building partnerships and promoting stewardship opportunities.



### Climate Change Strategies

The Planning and Analysis Branch played a key role assisting the Office of Water in developing the “National Water Program Strategy: Response to Climate Change”, an initial effort to describe climate change impacts on water programs, define goals and objectives for responding to climate change, and identify a comprehensive package of specific response actions.

The Branch was also instrumental in the development of the Region 6 Clean Energy and Climate Change Strategy. The States in Region 6 generate over 35% of the nation’s fossil fuel derived Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from industrial sources, and also generate over 15% of the nation’s fossil fuel derived CO<sub>2</sub> from both transportation and electric power sources. To counter the amount of greenhouse gases generated in Region 6, there are vast and untapped sources of renewable energy (solar and wind) in our states. For example, Texas ranks number one among states in solar potential, and produces the most wind power of any U.S. state.



photo: EPA

### Region 6 Climate Change Forum

The Branch helped organize and host the first of-its-kind Climate Change Forum between Region 6 States and EPA. Regional Administrator Richard Greene welcomed over 30 State officials and representatives from Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas to discuss state and federal perspectives; better understand individual and mutual concerns; and identify follow-up needs. In addition representatives from the British Consulate-General shared lessons learned from the United Kingdom’s climate change policies.



photo: EPA



photo: EPA

### The Solution Is In Your Hands Exhibit

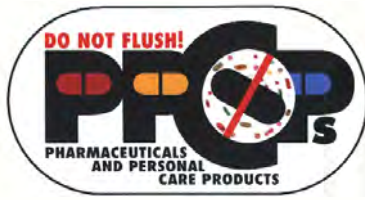
“Simple Yet Profound” - The exhibit won the praises of Region 6’s Regional Administrator during the unveiling and DVD presentation.

The Planning and Analysis Branch developed the exhibit through a Regional Geographic Initiatives (RGI) grant, in line with EPA’s goal of promoting an ethic of improving water and energy use practices to increase efficiency, eliminate waste and conserve water resources.

Audiences are expected to walk away with simple everyday ideas/steps that can be applied in their lives and in their homes to save money and the earth for future generations.

## partnership

## Promoting an Ethic of Water Efficiency and Protection



## Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products (PPCPs) Social Marketing Campaign for College and University Campuses

Several recent studies have detected PPCPs in treated wastewater effluent, and in rivers and lakes that serve as sources of drinking water. One source of these contaminants is the improper disposal of unused medicines down toilets and in drains. The presence of these biologically active compounds in surface waters have raised concerns about human health and the health of aquatic wildlife. EPA Region 6 seeks to reduce the occurrence of these compounds in surface water and protect drinking water sources.

Working in partnership with the University of Dallas (UD) Graduate School of Management, the Partnerships and Communications Team developed a Social Marketing Campaign for managing PPCPs on college campuses. This successful partnership resulted in the development of a social marketing strategy and advertising campaign to raise awareness of PPCPs issues on college and university campuses and foster behavior change to prevent unused PPCPs from being flushed down toilets and poured in drains. The Team will continue to partner with the UD Graduate School of Management to organize a campus unused drug “take back” program.

## Tarrant County “Every Drop Counts” Campaign

The Partnerships and Communication Team launched the first county-wide water conservation initiative with Tarrant County involving 1.7 million people, 33 cities, 4,000 employees, elected officials, city facility managers, public works directors, independent school districts, and other large water users. A public education program coined “Every Drop Counts” resulted in 900 county employees pledging to reduce water use at work and home, and prompted several local newspaper articles promoting water conservation tips. At the conclusion of the campaign, 23 Tarrant County buildings installed automatic flush low flow toilets, 18 buildings installed automatic “hands free” water faucets, an out of date cooling tower was replaced which netted a water savings of 40%, and the largest water user, the Tarrant County Corrections Center realized a 50% reduction in water use by installing 3-minute timers on shower facilities.



## WaterSense Program

The Planning and Analysis Branch developed a successful marketing strategy to promote WaterSense, a voluntary partnership program launched in June 2006 as part of the RA's 400-Day Plan commitment. The Program has been rapidly expanding and as a result in FY08, Region 6 enlisted 37 new WaterSense Partners. Under the WaterSense program, interested stakeholders can join under any of five categories: Promotional, Retailers and Distributors, Landscape Irrigation Professionals and Professional Certifying Organizations.

Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Urban Solutions Center, Dallas (Texas AgriLife), became an EPA Water Sense partner in 2008. The Center works with water and utility districts, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), city and county governments, landscapers, Master Gardeners, irrigators, naturalists and individual homeowners and landowners to provide the latest science-based information on water conservation.

## North Texas Urban Irrigation Symposium

EPA Region 6 joined its new WaterSense partner, Texas AgriLife, in planning and conducting an irrigation symposium on July 22, 2008. The WQPD Director and Planning & Analysis Branch staff provided expertise in panel discussions on current water issues affecting North Texas and the new state of Texas irrigation guidelines. Other organizations represented in the panel were Texas AgriLife, the Dallas Irrigation Association, the TCEQ, the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association, City of Fort Worth, City of Frisco, City of Plano and NCTCOG.



Representatives from EPA and AgriLife Research and Extension Urban Solutions Center

Photo: AgriLife Research and Extension Urban Solutions Center

## leadership

## Dallas' Premier Earth Day Event



Each year the Planning and Analysis Branch becomes the center for one of Region 6's most visible and energetic community outreach activities. *EarthFest* is a downtown Dallas celebration of Earth Day that

draws thousands of people each year. It includes music, food, entertainment, and a wide variety of environmental exhibits, as well as cleanup activities throughout the downtown area by teams of employees from downtown businesses.

Now entering its sixth year, *EarthFest* is made possible through a partnership between EPA Region 6, the City of Dallas, Downtown Dallas, Inc. and Keep Dallas



Beautiful. In addition, in 2008, the event became an official part of an environmental initiative of WFAA-TV which significantly expanded media visibility for the event, including several segments on WFAA-TV's *Good Morning Texas* program.

Overall the coordination for *EarthFest* is led by the Permits Processing Team and involves the participation of staff throughout the Region 6 office.

photos: EPA

## GIS Analysis

In 2008, the Water Information and Analysis Team generated geographical data and maps of priority watersheds for the five States within Region 6 identifying nonpoint source projects as well as analyzing stream flow and water quality trends. This information aids in water program decision making. The additional geographic information system support includes analyses and map generation of the US-Mexico border area for the NPDES Permits Branch. This area is part of the binational TMDL pilot project of the Rio Grande in Texas.

## Graphic Design

The Water Information and Analysis Team assisted the Region 6 Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs (OEJTA) by preparing EJ reports for 59 sites in 2008. These reports show the environmental impact that water related projects will have on the surrounding communities and are used by state agencies as well as EPA employees to evaluate these projects.

Other projects completed include scriptwriting for the Gulf of Mexico 20th Anniversary Video, Border 2012 fact sheets design, Agricultural Committee annual report, and numerous displays and exhibits which support a variety of program presentations.

## Support of Permitting Programs

The Permit Processing Team implements regulatory and policy requirements needed to support permitting programs in the Water Quality Protection Division. For FY08, the Team coordinated 31 actions for TMDL public notifications, processed and reviewed 63 NPDES permit applications, issued 23 NPDES permits, and took actions on 260 UIC permits. The Team also coordinated two public hearings and meetings held in New Mexico for the Buckman Diversion and the Los Alamos National Lab permits.

## Migration of NPDES Data to Integrated Compliance Information System (ICIS)

The Permit Processing Team provides updates to Headquarters on a regular basis and is currently involved with the migration of NPDES data to ICIS. The state environmental offices in New Mexico, Arkansas and Oklahoma have migrated all aspects of their data into the system. Texas and Louisiana plan to migrate in August 2009. The Team continues to support Region 6 states to ensure a smooth transition into ICIS.

## partnership

## Tribal Training DVD

In collaboration with the Region 6 Tribal Operations Committee (RTOC) and the Region 6 Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs, the Branch produced a DVD which is designed to provide an introduction and basic orientation to tribal environmental program management. The partnership between the RTOC and EPA Region 6 was instrumental in concept development, the creation of a script and ultimately the production of this DVD.



# Drinking Water and Source Water Protection

## Source Water Protection Branch



### Assuring Safe Drinking Water

The Source Water Protection Branch (SWPB) demonstrated EPA's commitment to protect the health of citizens of Region 6 by building State and Tribal capabilities through technical and program expertise. These efforts ensured safe drinking water for Region 6 residents during FY08.

### Building State and Tribal Capacity



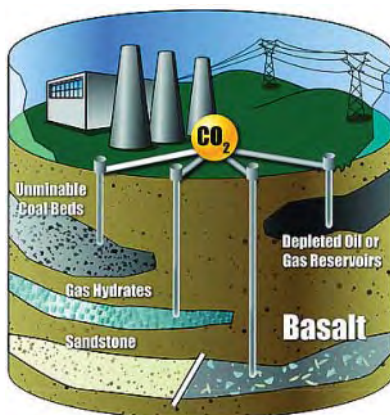
The Branch continues to invest resources in building State and Tribal capabilities to implement drinking water and UIC programs. It provided numerous Safe Drinking Water Information System training sessions

throughout the Region which enabled the States to make significant strides in data reporting and management. Additionally, UIC technical assistance was provided to State primacy agencies in Region 6 on topics such as Class I hazardous and non-hazardous waste injection well pressure fall-off tests, step rate tests, and UIC inspector training. In December 2007, Region 6 conducted a pressure fall-off test training course in Santa Fe, NM, well attended by EPA and State UIC regulators.

### CO<sub>2</sub> Geosequestration

Region 6 is recognized nationally as a leader in the developing program area of carbon geosequestration using deep well injection, and in FY 2008, was the most active Region in the development of the UIC geosequestration proposed regulations. Because of the SWPB's expertise with deep well injection technologies,

EPA HQ requested Region 6 involvement in several workshops and conferences. Region 6 will continue to play a key role in this promising approach to mitigating greenhouse gas and its effects on climate change.



### Underground Injection Control (UIC)

In 2008 several notable actions occurred as a result of the close cooperation between the Branch and state UIC programs. UIC State oversight personnel continued to work with the State of Oklahoma's Class II UIC program to improve the State's ability to protect underground sources of drinking water (USDWs) through special projects providing equipment and training designed to identify sources of subsurface ground water contamination. Consultation with the Louisiana UIC program resulted in the State expanding its protection of USDWs afforded by its program to include the injection of drilling wastes into the annulus of production wells. This action increased the State's UIC program to include one of every five newly drilled oil and gas exploratory wells in Louisiana. As a result of oversight and a close working relationship with the Texas Railroad Commission, new permitting procedures were developed, reducing the risk to USDWs from shallow injection of large volumes of wastes generated from Barnett Shale gas field production activities.

### Sole Source Aquifer (SSA)

On January 10, 2008 the EPA Region 6 Administrator approved designation of the Española Basin Aquifer System as a Sole Source Aquifer. This New Mexico SSA is the sixth in Region 6 and the first located in New Mexico. During 2008, SWPB staff reviewed and commented on over 200 Federal financial assistance projects from the six Regional SSAs to help prevent aquifer contamination.

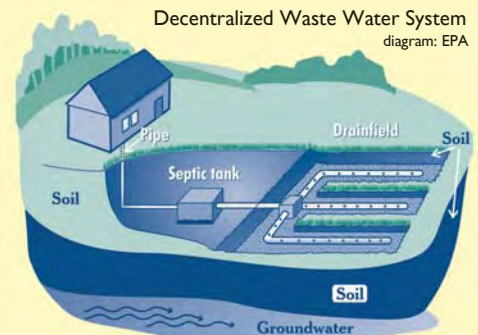
## partnership

## Partnership with Region 6 Enforcement for Environmental Benefit

The Ground Water/UIC Section prioritized the review of an injection well no migration petition for a facility that had released over 50 million gallons of acid to the Houston Ship Channel due to a breach in a retention pond. This effort supported an enforcement consent order which was designed to prevent another release. In March of FY08, the Ground Water/UIC Section confirmed the deep injection well operation was safe for human health and the environment, and the facility was able to use the well to dispose of the acid waste and avoid another release.

## Decentralized Waste Water Training

On June 26, 2008, the SWPB, in partnership with New Mexico State University (NMSU), hosted several Tribal members from Pueblos in New Mexico at the first one day training in the design, construction and maintenance of on-site septic and decentralized waste water treatment systems. The training was developed specifically for Tribes and Pueblos in New Mexico and was held at an easily accessible location in Albuquerque. Failing septic systems can cause contamination of domestic drinking water wells as well as surface waters.



# Drinking Water

## Early Implementation of the Stage 2 Disinfection Byproducts (Stage 2) and Long Term 2 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment (LT2) Drinking Water Rules



photo: EPA

The Stage 2 Disinfectants and Disinfection Byproducts Rule (Stage 2 DBPR) and the Long Term 2 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule (LT2) will bolster existing regulations and provide a higher level of protection to drinking water supplies. States have taken varying approaches to implementing the Stage 2 and LT2 Rules for which they do not yet have primacy. The Drinking Water Section provided assistance to most States on implementation of the rules. In Oklahoma, EPA Region 6 has full responsibility for early implementation activities. Approximately 34 training sessions were conducted in the States, and over 550 water system compliance plans have been evaluated. The Section mailed reminder letters to help systems better understand the requirements, and provided on-site technical assistance with electronic data reporting to the major laboratories in Oklahoma, facilitating automated compliance determinations.

## Source Water Protection Program (SWP)

As of June 30, 2008, the Region 6 states reported that they have substantially implemented Source Water Protection programs for 26% of their community water systems (2,163) serving 50% of the population (18,749,304). Source water assessments were also conducted at 4 tribal public water systems in Oklahoma, and SWP activities were conducted at 16 Tribes in New Mexico. To date 81% of tribal community water systems (44 of 54) have achieved substantial implementation of their source water protection plan, serving 95% of the Region 6 tribal population (64,796 out of 68,506).

## Tribal Drinking Water Program

The Tribal Drinking Water Program works with Tribes to maintain compliance with drinking water regulations through direct technical assistance. Radionuclides sampling is complete for 100% of CWS and 92% of CWS have met the requirements to be placed on reduced monitoring schedules, saving thousands of dollars on sampling and analysis. In addition, sampling for all contaminate groups was completed, and sanitary surveys were conducted such that goal numbers were exceeded. Compliance with the arsenic rule is on track, and the Region is currently working with five systems to transition into the new arsenic requirements. Numerous trainings and workshops were provided to Tribal operators to help improve compliance, all of which were well attended.

leadership

### Area Wide Optimization Program (AWOP)

The AWOP has helped the States of Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma deal with compliance issues related to the Disinfection By-Product Stage I Rule. The number of systems in non-compliance was cut from about 60 in Arkansas to about 12 using operational improvement techniques. Similar improvements are ongoing in Oklahoma. Turbidity levels and disinfection by-product concentration trends have shown continued improvement in the partner states.



Participants at a Performance Based Training session in DeSoto, Louisiana analyze operational data.

photo: EPA

partnership

### Drinking Water Compliance Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

The Drinking Water Section worked with the NMED Drinking Water Bureau to improve drinking water compliance determination and the procedures for documenting these determinations into the SDWIS/STATE database. Through this partnership, the Drinking Water Section helped improve NMED compliance determination with drinking water regulations for public drinking water systems. This was accomplished by finalizing an NMED approved and implemented SOP as the result of workshops and conference calls over a two year period.

partnership

### Sanitary Survey Training

In 2008, the Source Water Protection Branch conducted three sanitary survey trainings for the states of Oklahoma, Colorado and in-house training for EPA Region 6. Region 6 is one of the few EPA Regions with the capacity to perform sanitary surveys on their own, and is recognized nationally for its leadership and innovations in this area. The Region's sanitary survey field experience has benefited our states in maintaining high compliance rates with drinking water rules, and in responding to natural disasters such as hurricanes. Sanitary survey training provided to our State partners is utilized in maintaining the effectiveness of an operative drinking water system to provide potable water to the public, and in assessing defects when natural or man-made service disruptions shut down water systems.



Sanitary Survey trainer Andy Waite at a facility in Oklahoma during Sanitary Survey Training  
Photo: Kim Ngo EPA Region 6

### Coliphage project supported by RGI funding

Escherichia coli (E. coli) have long been the standard indicator organism for fecal contamination in water supplies. With the EPA Ground Water Rule, effective in 2009, another fecal indicator, coliphage, has come to the forefront. Coliphage are viruses that specifically infect E. coli and are an excellent indicator of fecal contamination. Through funding support from EPA Region 6's RGI and support from the Drinking Water Section, the coliphage detection method has been modified for use in the field to make it more cost and time efficient for water systems. Virginia Tech University tested E. coli growth conditions for coliphage at various temperatures, incubation periods, growth media and removed certain steps to simplify the method. The method is ready for field testing and should save time and eliminate the need for several pieces of expensive lab equipment. The project will provide water systems an easier way to measure coliphage.

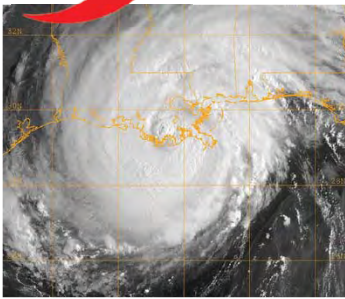


photo: Girls Inc. of Metropolitan Dallas

### Ground Water Center Provides Training At Summer Girls Camp

On June 25th, July 2nd, and July 22nd, members of the Ground Water Center presented a Ground Water model, a water flow experiment, and discussed the role of women in science and engineering at three sessions of Girls Incorporated of Metropolitan Dallas "Camp Smart." The organization has been in operation for 40 years. This year's camp theme was "Journey of Earth: Going Green." Camp Smart is aimed at girls from economically challenged neighborhoods entering the 5th and 6th grade.

# 2008 Hurricane Response



Hurricane Gustav

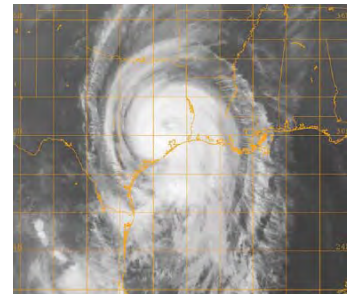
*In 2008, hurricanes Gustav and Ike brought devastation to large areas of both Texas and Louisiana.*



Cameron Parish, LA



Lafourche Parish, LA



Hurricane Ike

## Hurricane Gustav and Ike Drinking Water and Wastewater Response

As a result of damaging hurricanes in previous years, Region 6 established a water response team from several Divisions to assist States, when requested, during emergencies involving water infrastructure.

In September 2008, in response to hurricanes Gustav and Ike in Louisiana, Region 6 established drinking water assessment teams with Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH) staff and wastewater assessment teams with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) staff. Additionally, in response to hurricane Ike in Texas, the Region established drinking water and wastewater teams with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) staff. Under a mission assignment from FEMA, these teams conducted on-site assessments of drinking water and wastewater systems to determine operational status, emergency power and technical assistance needs, and risks to public health. A total of 107 drinking water and 274 wastewater assessments were conducted in Louisiana and 431 drinking water and 227 wastewater assessments were conducted in Texas.

Region 6 continues to coordinate with the States and other EPA Regions to further define roles and responsibilities of the water response team and to develop procedures for future emergencies. The Region has already conducted multiple internal lessons learned meetings from the 2008 hurricane responses.



photos: EPA

***Total Assessments for Hurricanes Gustav and Ike:  
538 drinking water and 501 wastewater assessments***

Hurricane damage in Texas





### Beyond Translation - Best Practice

In FY08, The Director of the Water Quality Protection Division, Miguel Flores, continued his leadership of EPA’s Beyond Translation initiative to address long-standing environmental challenges and promote EPA’s relevance to Hispanic communities, one of the fastest growing communities in the region. The primary objective of this new effort has been to encourage Hispanics to become active participants in the dialogue on the environmental challenges facing the U.S. and to become part of the solution, especially with respect to those issues that most impact their communities.

Through the establishment of new partnerships among EPA, federal, state and local government organizations, academia, and non-governmental organizations at the community level, EPA has begun to promote meaningful collaboration with community leaders in setting priorities and developing effective strategies to tackle a list of the most pressing environmental problems in Region 6. Through these new partnerships, leaders from EPA, Hispanic communities, small business, and academia have begun to address environmental health disparities, foster environmental education, and ensure greater participation of ethnic minorities in EPA’s regulatory and contractual process.



The effectiveness of the new partnerships has been most apparent through the series of forums, co-sponsored by Region 6 and leaders of Hispanic communities, in three key growth areas in Texas. Specifically, stakeholder forums were held in 2006, 2007, and 2008 in the cities of San Antonio, Houston, and McAllen, respectively. These meetings were so successful that other EPA Regions adopted a similar outreach effort, which in turn, recently prompted EPA to conduct a BT national forum in Washington, D.C.



photos: EPA

The grassroots approach of the EPA Region 6 Beyond Translation initiative with Hispanic communities now serves as a “Best Practice” model for the agency’s efforts to address unique challenges presented by other ethnic groups in the United States, while enhancing environmental stewardship among the nation’s minority communities.



workforce diversity

### UTEP & EPA Focus on Recruitment

The Beyond Translation Forums generated a number of recommendations, one being EPA’s participation in recruitment events at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) to increase the pool of applicants for EPA vacancies. In 2007, EPA signed an MOU with the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the HSI graduating the largest number of Hispanic engineers. In FY08, through the EPA/UTEP partnership, EPA reached out 4,000 students at several recruitment events and conferences hosted by UTEP and its affiliates, the Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers, and the Society of Mexican American Engineers and Scientists.



# U.S.-MEXICO BORDER 2012 FOUR-STATE REGIONAL WORKGROUP

Miguel I. Flores Co-Chairs the Four-State Regional Workgroup which is made up of federal, state, local governments, non-profit organizations, academia, and representation from the general public. The Four-State Regional Workgroup works together to address the goals established under Border 2012.

## What is Border 2012?

The U.S.-Mexico Environmental Program (Border 2012) is a collaboration between the United States and Mexico to improve the environment and protect the health of the nearly 12 million people living along the border. The bi-national program focuses on improving air quality, providing safe drinking water, reducing the risk of exposure to hazardous waste, and ensuring emergency preparedness along the U.S.-Mexico border.

## 2008 Four-State Regional Workgroup Accomplishments

2008 saw a great deal of activity within the four-state region which includes Texas, Tamaulipas, Coahuila, and Nuevo León.

In the water sector, funding from the Border Environmental Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) is helping finance seventeen projects that are currently under construction. With regard to air, EPA and TCEQ are funding school bus retrofits. In waste, Nuevo Laredo implemented the first collection program for household hazardous waste in Mexico, and is now being replicated in Reynosa and Matamoros, Tamaulipas. One major accomplishment this year is the closure of the four illegal dump sites in Reynosa.



Multiple environmental hazards exist in illegal dump sites.

Scrap tire management projects are underway in Piedras Negras, Eagle Pass, Cd. Acuña, Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa, Laredo and Matamoros. This year, more than one million tires were sent to cement kilns to be used as alternative fuel.



The elimination and management of scrap tires continues to be a priority for the U.S.-Mexico border region.

The City of Laredo Environmental Services Department continues to work on an initiative targeting pre-school through second grade children in Laredo, Texas, as well as Laredo's sister city across the river - Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. Phase I of the Los Dos Laredos Environmental Education Project consists of producing new pre-K through 2nd grade environmental education material and gathering other pre-existing and available materials, and presenting the material by conducting several workshops on both sides of the Rio Grande, which will include all private and government funded day care provider entities and independent school districts.

The Laredo Health Department has developed a manual on toxics as well as an easy-to-use reference for use by health professionals.



### Division Advisory Workgroup

The Division Advisory Workgroup (DAW) focuses on employee matters by soliciting staff concerns with a goal of improving employee satisfaction and retention. This year, the DAW completed several projects that aid employees in “getting to know” their co-workers.

- Each Branch received a copy of the Division’s New Employee Manual, containing helpful information such as organizational charts, administrative processes, EPA web links and other information to assist new employees navigate around the Division. The manual is also posted on the Division Intranet.
- New employee photographs were added to the Division Photo Directory. These can be seen on the Division Intranet to help introduce new staff to their colleagues.
- Volunteers from the Division drafted a revision of the Division’s People Plan, a document which articulates the overall strategy for managing, training and supporting WQPD staff. New Region 6 employee programs were added to the document.

### Water Quality Protection Division Training Council

The Division Training Council is comprised of WQPD staff and management. Its mission is to develop and implement a training program for employees that will focus on maintaining the core competencies identified in the Strategic Plan and identify training resources to meet those needs.

Accomplishments during 2008 include:

- identifying training needs through interviews with the Associate Directors and by surveying Division staff.
- developing an inventory of training materials in each Branch.
- organizing and conducting monthly training classes.
- establishing a Water Quality Protection Training website.

Training classes included: watershed outreach, project management, collaborative decision-making, basics of groundwater, and the Blue Planet video. A total of 105 persons attended these training sessions.

The Training Council continues to organize monthly training initiatives. Future efforts will also include use of internet and Video-on-Demand training, and partnering with the Regional Science Council.

### Acknowledgements

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Rio Grande at Big Bend Ranch, Texas  
Photo: Tom Nystrom, EPA Region 6



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