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EPA Region 6
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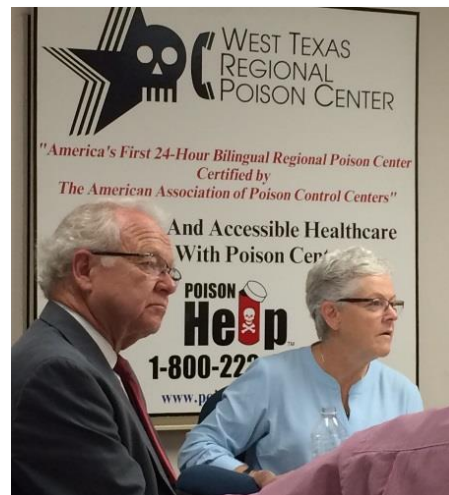


EPA Administrator visits the Border

In July 2016, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy visited the border to learn more about the environmental health issues that residents who live in border colonias and rural communities in West Texas and Southern New Mexico still face. Through her meetings with local stakeholders she also conveyed EPA’s role in public health. During her visit to El Paso, Texas, Administrator McCarthy was able to meet with pediatricians from the Southwest Center for Pediatric Environmental Health (SWCPEH), staff at the West Texas Regional Poison Center, and students enrolled in public health at the University of Texas Houston School of Public Health and Texas Tech University, as well as, University of Texas at El Paso – EPA summer interns. During the meeting, attendees discussed regional concerns, like poor air quality and its effect on respiratory health, and how food swamps — areas inundated with junk food — propagate diabetes and obesity. “A lot of people don’t know it, but the EPA is fundamental for public health,” McCarthy said. “It’s about bringing safe drinking water; it’s about clean air; it’s about what products you use and what kind of exposures to toxic chemicals you may face.”



EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy addresses pediatricians and medical students in El Paso, Texas.



EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy (right) and Region 6 Administrator Ron Curry (left), met with staff from the SWCPEH and toured its facilities.

Administrator McCarthy is also looking towards building stronger relationships with medical institutions to help solve the environmental health problems faced by communities. By utilizing the SWCPEH, jointly funded by EPA and CDC, EPA is able to work more closely with the medical community and utilize their expertise for outreach and trainings. “Medical professionals really have an important part to play in all of this,” she reminded her audience. “They can tell us what they’re seeing in terms of health impacts. They can help communicate to individuals about what to do to reduce those environmental exposures.”

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EPA Administrator visits the Border Cont'd

As part of her visit, Administrator McCarthy toured several sites in Chaparral and Vado, New Mexico. These communities and many other similar border communities, often have sub-standard housing, unpaved roads, illegal dumping, standing water, and minimal infrastructure to support basic services such as electricity and clean water. During one of the site visits, Doña Ana County District 1 Commissioner, Billy G. Garret, stressed that Southern New Mexico communities face a serious issue of illegal dumping that poses a threat to public health.

Overall, Administrator McCarthy's visit reiterated EPA's support of border communities and willingness to work with community stakeholders to improve the public health of its residents. Through the EPA Border Program, several grants in the past have been designated towards clean-up of illegally dumped scrap tires, environmental education public outreach campaigns and to help implement scrap tire management plans. More information: Paula Selzer (selzer.paula@epa.gov) or Maria Sisneros (Sisneros.maria@epa.gov)

Healthy Homes Trainings

Through funding from EPA Region 6's Lead Based Paint Program and support from the Children's Health and US-Mexico Border Programs, three border communities were able to receive Healthy Homes Training in 2016. The trainings, which were provided by a small grant to the University of Texas School of Health Science Center in Houston, took place in June (El Paso, Texas) and August (McAllen and Harlingen, Texas). Approximately 103 persons received the training in these communities. Unlike the El Paso and McAllen trainings which focused on the initial "Healthy Homes Training" Curriculum, people who attended the Harlingen training received training on "How to start a Healthy Homes Initiative in your Community". The training covered materials that empowers stakeholders who have already taken the initial Healthy Homes training with tools that they can use to launch a healthy homes program within their community.



In addition to the trainings provided by EPA Region 6, the SWCPEH became certified to teach Healthy Homes in 2016. Having access to this new partner will give EPA Region 6 the opportunity to continue training around the Region at no cost to local communities. Having the ability to certify trainers and educate about environmental asthma triggers, lead based paint, household chemicals and pesticides, the training also serves as an incentive for communities to partner with EPA to develop sustained relationships on children's environmental health protection. More information: Paula Selzer (selzer.paula@epa.gov) or Maria Sisneros (Sisneros.maria@epa.gov)

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Children's Environmental Health Excellence Awards

On October 13, 2016, the Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Children Health Protection (OCHP) recognized the 2016 Children's Environmental Health Excellence Awardees at the Children's Environmental Health Network's inaugural Children's Environmental Health Day Event in Washington, D.C. The awardees were recognized for their significant impact to increase the number of health professionals who can address children's environmental health concerns. Maria Sisneros, from the El Paso Border Office, had the privilege of attending the event. One of the award recipients was Dr. Genny Carillo, a long-time EPA Region 6 Partner to the Children's Health and Border Program Offices and U.S. co-facilitator of Gulf Task Force Environmental Education and Health Committee.

Dr. Carillo, who works at Texas A&M Health Science Center, School of Public Health was recognized for her work on asthma along the US-Mexico Border. In particular, Dr. Carrillo found that there was a high hospitalization rate in South Texas due to asthma. Determined to use her background in environmental health to help, she forged relationships with health professionals and organizations in the community, that later formalized into the McAllen Asthma Coalition. This group focused their efforts on creating awareness of asthma in local communities. Dr. Carrillo also developed an asthma program that provides education to both, children diagnosed with asthma, and their families. A major component of this program is a curriculum developed by Dr. Carrillo that is certified by the Texas Department of State Health Services and offers continuing education credits. The goal of this component is to provide training to health professionals such as community health workers, respiratory therapy students, school nurses and physician assistants. These individuals use the knowledge gained to provide asthma education to children and their families and also provide training to peers and colleagues via a "train-the-trainer" model.



Dr. Ruth Etzel (EPA Director of OCHP) presents Dr. Genny Carillo (Texas A&M) with the Children's Environmental Health Excellence Award in Washington, D.C.

For more information on this event and awardees please visit: [EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection](#) Or contact: Maria Sisneros (Sisneros.maria@epa.gov)

Children's Health Symposium – Brownsville, Texas

In 2015, the Office of Children's Health and the US-MX Border 2020 Program partnered to bring a greater focus to children's health issues along the US-MX Border. In September 2015, Region 6 partnered with PEHSU to host the first Children's Health symposium in El Paso, Texas. Due to the success of the event, on August 25, in Brownsville, Texas, the second children's health symposium in Region 6 took place. The event brought together new partners to the table, including the White House Initiative "Strong Cities, Strong Communities", the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV),

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Children's Health Symposium – Brownsville, Texas Cont'd

who hosted the event at their Brownsville campus. Like the first symposium topics included: Asthma & Air pollution, diabetes/obesity, vector-borne illnesses, fracking, tobacco and e-cigarettes, prenatal exposures, leukemia in the environment. Unlike the first symposium, the second symposium brought both US and MX speakers to speak about each of the topics, in order that participants could hear both countries perspectives and actions being done. Opening remarks were provided by Regional Administrator, Ron Curry, UTRGV School of Medicine Associate Dean, Dr. Leonel Vela, as well as, City of Brownsville Director of Public Health, Arturo Rodriguez, who attended on behalf of Mayor Tony Martinez. Regional Administrator, Ron Curry, said protecting children's health is one of EPA's most important priorities, "a goal that factors into nearly all our decisions."

A plenary session focused on ZIKA gave participants the latest developments of the disease from Dr. Gredia Huerta, a member of EPA's Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee and from Puerto Rico, an area that has seen some of the most activity with regards to ZIKA. There was also a session focused on Promotoras and an EPA-White House Session focused on "Collaborative Partnerships". Rafael Casanova, from EPA's Superfund Program, also delivered a presentation on the Superfund site of Donna Canal.

Overall, the event was attended by 130-140 participants, coming from El Paso, Laredo with the majority being from LRGV. Participants included community health workers, local, federal and state agency, and academics. The



Dr. Leonel Vela, UTRGV School of Medicine senior associate dean for Education and Academic Affairs, welcomed participants, to the Children's Environmental Health Symposium on Aug. 26, at the UTRGV Brownsville Campus. (Photo copyright: [UTRGV](#))



Ron Curry, Region 6 Administrator (left), being interviewed by local television station said protecting children's health is one of EPA's most important priorities, "a goal that factors into nearly all our decisions."

symposium also supports the EPA Border Collaborative Agreement with the US-MX Border Commission. Other partners included in the planning process included: Southwest Center for Pediatric Environmental Health, City of Brownsville, UTRGV, Texas Tech University, US/Mexico Border Health Commission, Border Environment Cooperation Commission, Department of Health and Human Services, Texas Dept. of State Health Services Office of Border Health. More information: Paula Selzer (selzer.paula@epa.gov) or Maria Sisneros (Sisneros.maria@epa.gov)

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Rio Grande / Rio Bravo Extreme Heat and Health Binational Workshop

On July 13, 2016, the Rio Grande / Rio Bravo Extreme Heat and Health binational workshop, took place in El Paso, Texas. The workshop brought together varying sector agencies from across the US, Mexico and Canada, with the goal of working towards developing an International Integrated Heat Health Information System. The vision of the system is such that agencies or different stakeholders can integrate and disseminate information to best deal with public health in regards to heat-illnesses and prevention of heat related deaths.

Dr. Carlos Rincon, who served on the workshop steering committee, and two EPA Border office summer interns, helped workshop sponsors by contacting Mexico National Senior Officials from the ministry of Health, along with gathering participation of local emergency responders, and water utilities staff.

Speakers included staff National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Office of Resilience and Sustainability in El Paso, New Mexico Department of Health, UTEP, Arizona State University, El Paso National Weather Service and Proteccion Civil in Juárez, presented on how their agency or offices currently monitor and/or deal with heat related public health information.

The morning session presentations provided the audience with a glimpse at how different agencies monitor weather, deal with heat related emergencies, agencies which offer help to those who are in need of relief from extreme heat, and other city-wide solutions in areas prone to high heat indexes. One talk focused on the current pilot programs that are implemented in Arizona, such as, a “cold-button” located at bus stops, in which, a button when pressed will release a fast cold gust of air from above to try to cool of pedestrians as they wait for their bus. Other talks focused on how their agency provides resources for people from lower socio-economic programs, for instance, delivering cooling fans to those who cannot afford one.



Participants from the US, Canada and Mexico gather at the Tech H2o in El Paso, Texas to discuss an International Integrated Heat Health Information System.

The afternoon session had workshop participants break out into five work teams: 1) Historical Climatology and vulnerability; 2) Linkages between heat parameters and health outcomes; 3) Prediction, outlooks, early warning; 4) Communications and engagement; 5) Capacity building and training. The break-out sessions helped identify needs or gaps, as well as, strengths and opportunities that currently exist for the specific topic. Breakout groups discussed key strategies or solutions for the gaps and finding the parties that would be principal leaders or partners to help formulate an action. In addition, participants discussed finding resources, identifying key steps, volunteers and committee leaders who lead these efforts and help achieve these actions. This effort will continue until June 2017. More information: Carlos Rincon (Rincon.carlos@epa.gov)

Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) Meeting

On September 22, 2016 the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) for Air Quality Improvement on the El Paso, TX, Doña Ana County, NM and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua shared air-basin, held its 67th meeting at the Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine facilities in Las Cruces, New Mexico. US Co-chair, Mark Hansen, of EPA R6 Multi-Media Division, and MX Co-Chair, Ana Patricia Martinez, Director General for the office of Air Quality Management and Registry of Emissions and Transfer of Contaminants within Mexico's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Secretariat (SEMARNAT), gave welcoming remarks, and an overview of the meeting agenda.

The meeting consisted of four presentations:

- Dr Carlos Rincon presented the air quality report of the binational air-basin for the months of January thru April 2016;
- Dr. David DuBois, the New Mexico Climatologist and professor at NMSU, gave a report on the conceptual plan for the 2017 El Paso Ozone Transport ;
- Cesar Rene Diaz, Director of Juárez 's Ecology Department, reported on Ciudad Juárez 's Air Quality Monitoring Network;
- Alfredo Ruiz, The State of Chihuahua Secretariat for Urban Development and Ecology presented the State of Chihuahua PROAIRE (comparably to a State Implementation Plan in the U.S.)

The JAC has been recognized as a model for binational collaboration amongst the three levels of government, academia, private sector and non-governmental organizations. The U.S.-Mexico border area, and specifically the Tri-State region (El Paso, Texas, Doña Ana County, NM, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua) has benefited from the partnerships working to improve the air shed under the Clean Air Act and the 1983 La Paz Agreement through synergy and cooperation from the diverse stakeholder group.

At the JAC's 67th meeting an innovative interpretation technology for those in the room and for people that joined remotely via phone or video was used. The technology allowed remote participants to have simultaneously interpretation just as if they were physically present at the meeting. Participants with questions or comments, either called an English - language or Spanish-language channel and when they spoke it was seamlessly interpreted into Spanish or English for people in the room. Simultaneous interpretation is a vital part of the meeting, since government officials participate from Washinton D.C., Dallas, Austin, Chihuahua City, Mexico City, and other places. This creative tool allows also for program presenters that have conflict for physically attending the meeting, to do so from their office. More information: Carlos Rincon (Rincon.carlos@epa.gov)

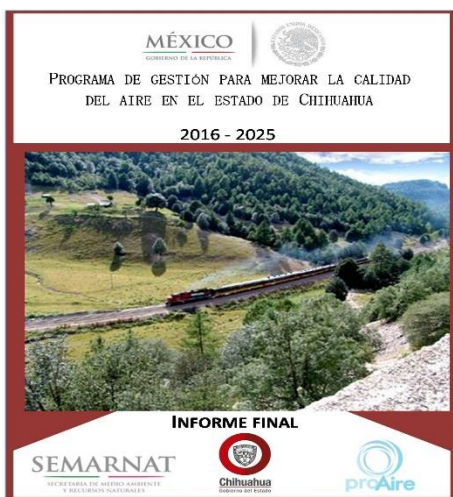


Attendees at the 67th meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) in El Paso, Texas on September 22, 2016.

Over the past year the Ecology Department of Ciudad Juárez, the SEMARNAT, the TCEQ, the EPA, and many others have collaborated on enhancing air quality monitoring in the binational airshed. The group held a half dozen binational planning calls with simultaneous interpretation and up to 20 participants from both sides of the border. In August management and technical staff from Ciudad Juárez visited TCEQ headquarters in Austin, and later that month, an air quality subcontractor performed an extensive on-site audit of the three continuous air monitors in Ciudad Juárez.

Based on the recommendations from the project report, Ciudad Juárez' Director of Ecology reported the results of the audit and the long-term status of the network. The group will continue to work together to improve air monitoring for reliable data collection ultimately leading to improved decision making in the politically and geographically complicated airshed.

Programa de Gestión de Calidad de Aire (ProAire)



On September 6, the Programa de Gestión de Calidad de Aire (ProAire) for the State of Chihuahua was presented to the Governor of Chihuahua, and on September 16 to members of the Joint Advisory Committee. It is the first state-wide ProAire that has been developed for the Mexican states along the U.S.-Mexico Border. The ProAire is the equivalent to the USEPA Clean Air Act's State Implementation Plan (SIP). The two previous ProAire programs in the state of Chihuahua were only designed to include data from Ciudad Juárez. Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua's Ecology Department, with support of the JAC, have implemented two comprehensive ProAires since the JAC was formed in 1996. The PROAIRES strengthen the existing SIPs in the El Paso area.

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Programa de Gestión de Calidad de Aire (ProAire)Cont'd

Although Ciudad Juárez 's ProAire and the Texas SIP have made great strides in improving the air quality of the b-national airshed, Mexico's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) launched an initiative of producing State-wide ProAires, through leadership of the State of Chihuahua's Ministry of Urban Development and Environment (SEDUE).

Similar to the SIP process in the US, the two agencies, SEMARNAT and SEDUE, along with members of the JAC, dedicated resources towards conducting 11 public meetings to include stakeholder input, that included the general public, stakeholders from various sectors such as local and federal governments, academia, public health non-governmental organizations, industry, chamber of commerce, transportation, and international trade and custom brokers. The State of Chihuahua ProAire program, will serve as a template for the other 5 Northern (Border) Mexican States on how to engage and leverage various resources and collaborations, that include, possible contributions from their U.S. corresponding partners. More information: Carlos Rincon (Rincon.carlos@epa.gov)



On September 6, the ProAire was presented to the Governor of Chihuahua at the State Building in the city of Chihuahua.

E-Waste Recycling Event in Ciudad Juárez , Chihuahua

On August 12th thru the 14th, a three-day Electronic Waste Collection event was held in Ciudad Juárez to collect of Electronic Waste (E-waste) for recycling, while supporting City schools by receiving computers, and the community was greeted with a small tree for reforestation. Dr. Carlos Rincon as part of the B2020 E-waste recycling steering committee joined the State of Chihuahua Governor and the State of Chihuahua Urban Development and Ecology Secretary, whom along with Ciudad Juárez Mayors and Keep Juárez Beautiful (Juárez Limpio) kicked off the three-day E-waste collection event, which was held at "Plaza Sendero" Parking lot in Ciudad Juárez . The E-waste recycling steering committee is presided by Juárez 's Mayor, The SEMARNAT Delegate in the State of Chihuahua, Brenda Rios Prieto, State of Chihuahua Ecology and Urban Development Secretary Arq. Nieves Maloof, along with Juárez 's Chapter of Mexico's National Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Small Industry Manufacturing, the US Consulate in Ciudad Juárez , the Television and Radio Multi Media Association members Televisa, Azteca, Channel 44, Channel 5, local NGOs and School District, the Juárez 's Vehicle Emissions Inspection Association and E-waste collection corporation Ekorecikla. E-waste collected exceeded its set Goal of 50 Tons, by totaling 80 Tons plus other special waste collected as well, such as spent oil, batteries, used tires, toners, domestic cleaning and pest control chemicals. More information: Carlos Rincon (Rincon.carlos@epa.gov)

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E-Waste Recycling Event in Ciudad Juárez , Chihuahua Cont'd



Emergency Response Bi-national Exercises & Drills

On July 5, 2016 Maria Sisneros and Dr. Carlos Rincon participated on a B2020 Emergency Response bi-national tabletop exercise, joined by City of El Paso Emergency Management, Chief Villanueva and Lt. Quinn. Participation by US partners was supported by using GoToMeeting which allowed for PROFEPA, State of Chihuahua Civil Protection, Ciudad Juárez Civil Protection, Juárez's LECP, and others to virtually communicate (live) during the binational tabletop exercise. The exercise involved the release/spill of a chemical at the Zaragoza POE on the Mexican Side. The Tabletop exercise focused on the Mexico's local, state and federal response and communication with its US counterparts. The drill exercised the local Sister City Plan between Ciudad Juárez and El Paso. The drill is part of an annual event PROFEPA holds each July to commemorate the Agency's anniversary.



On August 19, 2016 Carlos Rincon participated on a binational emergency response exercise led by Ciudad Juárez and State of Chihuahua's Civil Protection Directors, Efren Matamoros and Alfredo Garcia Acosta, respectively. The exercise was in coordination with Rafael Valenzuela, of PEMEX-Gas, the PROFEPA Delegate and Local Emergency

Planning Committee partners or CLAM, as it is referred to in Mexico. The scenario exercised was that of a Gas Valve, located on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande, that controls pressure to a transboundary gas pipeline crossing the Rio Grande, experienced a gas release and explosion during a routine maintenance procedure by PEMEX operator, who suffered major burns to his body. The explosion then caused a vehicle nearby to catch on fire. The incident exercised the sister city plan, as well as the Joint Contingency Plan, the explosion called for several blocks of the surrounding Juárez Residential neighborhood to evacuate. Border 2020 partners included the Juárez Fire Department, the CLAM, Juárez Civil Protection, Chihuahua Civil Protection, PROFEPA and notification to US partners. Overall the exercise lasted 45 minutes. More information: Carlos Rincon (Rincon.carlos@epa.gov) or Maria Sisneros (Sisneros.maria@epa.gov)

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Region 6 LEPC Border Workshops

In 2016 EPA Region 6 conducted 32 Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) Workshops, with four workshops along the US-MX border (Las Cruces – NM; El Paso -TX, Laredo-TX, Harlingen/Brownsville – TX). The workshops were held to provide assistance and ideas to LEPCs and facilities on how to further implement the provisions of the Emergency Planning Committee Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA). EPA's Steve Mason, led for this effort, along with OSHA, DHS, and state representatives collaborated to present 32 workshops between May and October 2016. Over 100 local, state, federal government, and industry representatives attended these four border workshops, along with Maria Sisneros from the Border Office attended the El Paso workshop. The workshop agenda included presentations on:

EPCRA – 30 Year Anniversary

- Local Government Reimbursement Program
- Using Poison Control Centers during an Incident
- DHS – Chemical Safety Programs for your Facility
- Don't Forget the Other Groups for Your LEPC
- Gee, Where Do You Think That Release is Going?
- OSHA – Worker Safety During a Disaster
- State Programs / Issues
- Revisions to EPCRA / RCRA / RMP / SPCC as they relate to LEPCs

Presentations used during the workshops are posted at: <http://www.epaosc.org/lepcworkshops>

More information: Steve Mason (mason.steve@epa.gov) or Maria Sisneros (Sisneros.maria@epa.gov)

Junta de Los Rios Task Force

On July 20th, 2016 Carlos Rincon, of EPA R6 Border Office, and Gerardo Tarin, of Mexico's SEMARNAT in Ciudad Juárez, conducted the Junta de Los Rios Task Force annual public meeting held at City of Ojinaga, Chihuahua, City Council Chambers. Presiding over the meeting was both the Mayor of Ojinaga, Miguel Antonio Carreon Rohana, and the Mayor of Presidio, John Ferguson, who serve as Co-Chairs of the Junta de Los Rios Task Force. Stakeholders in attendance included the City of Ojinaga Ecology Director, the City of Presidio Public Works and Economic Director (Brad Newton), Mexico's Consulate located in Presidio (Lic. Sergio Francisco Salinas), Jake Geisbrecht, a Private Citizen representative of the US – Mexico Trade and Economic for Port of Entry infrastructure improvement and extension projects, and Carlos Nieto of Presidio, TX. Attending the meeting were also current administration City Council members and the City of Ojinaga Mayor Elect, Martin Sanchez who was joined by the City Manager elect, or SINDICO as it's called in Mexico.

Topics included:

- Update of PROAIRE for State of Chihuahua;
- B2020 Air Quality (AQ) network in Ojinaga, that has been funded through a grant awarded by BECC;

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Junta de los Rios Task Force Chihuahua Cont'd

- Status of the Task Force's 2-year action plan measures and priorities for 2015-2016 and upcoming 2017-2018 action plan. Topics discussed for the action plans included a solid waste and landfill in Ojinaga, used tires, water sanitation and its effect on public health with emphasis on the health emerging issue: Zika Virus;

Strategies for continuing reporting air quality, training and supervision of Ojinaga's technical personnel for AQ monitoring of Ojinaga's current PM₁₀ units, and shipment of AQ Filters to CIMAV laboratory in Chihuahua City under the supervision of Dr. Alfredo Campos Trujillo who will analyze the filters and will have the data ready for publication, on the City of Ojinaga and on other Task Force partners' web page. More information: Carlos A Rincon (Rincon.carlos@epa.gov)

Four-State Regional Workgroup Meetings

The Four-State Regional Workgroup includes parts of three Mexican States and a total of at least 29 municipalities in Northern Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas, and 168 cities and towns on the U.S. side of the border.

The Four-State RWG is divided into three geographically based Task Forces (TFs) — a) Amistad, b) Falcon, and c) Gulf, each of which has established subject-specific committees related to its priority concerns and the goals of the Border 2020 program. A brief narrative of the meetings that took place at each of the three TFs in June 2016 is found below.



Amistad Task Force. – The Amistad Task Force meeting took place on June 21 at the Civic Center in Del Rio, Texas with more than 25 stakeholders in attendance. Meeting participants included officials from the USEPA Region 6 El Paso, TCEQ, SEMARNAT Tamaulipas (via web conferencing), the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), Secretariat of Environment in Coahuila, City of Del Rio, City of Eagle Pass, Ecology Department of Piedras Negras, Ecology Department of Ciudad Acuña, the Kickapoo Tribe (via web conferencing) and other non-profit organizations.

The City Manager of Del Rio and representatives from local governments of Piedras Negras and Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila issued welcoming remarks, joined by the representative from the Coahuila Secretariat of Environment. Dr. Carlos Rincon of EPA along with Victor Wong of the TCEQ Region 16 Laredo office, discussed the structure/purpose of the meeting and provided an overview of the Border 2020 Program.

The meeting agenda included: 1) an earth day event held in April by the City of Del Rio; 2) the Ciudad Acuña ecology department presented the city's recycling program which used plastic and scrap tire materials for road paving projects; 3) The Piedras Negras ecology department presented on its Program "Strong Children for a Clean Piedras Negras," which consisted of involving the community, specifically

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Four-State Regional Workgroup Activities Cont'd

children (ages 6 to 14), in efforts related to the education, as well as, collection of scrap tires and plastic bottles in the community and; 4) the Secretariat of the Environment in Coahuila and the ecological group Green Tec Osos of Piedras Negras reported on the status of used electronics campaigns held throughout the state.

Finally, the meeting included a session on projects funded under the 2015-2016 Border RFP, as well as, a group discussion on the close-out of 2015-2016 Border 2020 Two-Year Action Plan. More information: Carlos Rincon (Rincon.carlos@epa.gov)



Meeting Participants in Amistad Task Force on June 21, 2016 in Del Rio, Texas.

Falcon Task Force's Environmental Education and Health Committee - The meeting of the Falcon Task Force's Environmental Education and Health Committee was held on June 22, 2016 at the Laredo Environmental Services Department. There were more than 25 attendees. These included officials of EPA Region 6 office in El Paso, TCEQ, SEMARNAT, Tamaulipas (via web conferencing), Secretariat of Environment in Nuevo León (via web conferencing), the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), Laredo Environmental Services, Texas Department of Health and Human Services, Mexican Consulate in Laredo, Texas Engineering Extension Services (TEEX), and academic institutions.

The meeting began with the committee co-facilitators issuing welcoming remarks. Dr. Carlos Rincon of the EPA Region 6 office in El Paso and Victor Wong of the TCEQ Region 16 Laredo office discussed the structure/purpose of the meeting and provided an overview of the Border 2020 Program.

The Laredo Health Department discussed efforts to address the Zika virus, among those actions there exists a closely coordination with the Nuevo Laredo Jurisdicción Sanitaria to conduct awareness and

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Four-State Regional Workgroup Activities Cont'd

prevention tools related to the Zika virus. The Autonomous University of Tamaulipas reported on the status of an environmental education and legislative project funded by the Border 2020 Program. The program consists of increasing training on environmental education tools and enhancing binational cooperation to implement innovative environmental education programs.

Officials from Caterpillar (a global manufacturer of heavy equipment) are working with the Nuevo Laredo Technological University on the design and construction of a wastewater treatment facility on campus. The plant would treat wastewater using a combined anaerobic pre-treatment and aerobic post-treatment process, replacing pits that store wastewater generated on campus.

The Rio Grande International Study Center (RGISC) reported on a project to restore the Manadas Creek Wetland. RGISC is working with schools to pick up trash in one of the branches of the creek. Information was shared to participants about Ciudad Acuña's plastic and scrap tire recycling program. There was also a discussion on the close-out of 2015-2016 Border 2020 Two-Year Action Plan. More information: Carlos Rincon (Rincon.carlos@epa.gov)



Meeting Participants in Falco Task Force (Environmental Health & Education Subcommittee) met on June 22, 2016 at the Laredo Environmental Services Department meeting space.

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Four-State Regional Workgroup Activities Cont'd

Gulf Task Force – Water Committee Meeting, met on Friday, June, 2015 in Harlingen, Texas. Maria Sisneros from the El Paso Border Office attended the meeting. The meeting was attended by approximately 26 bi-national stakeholders from both the U.S and Mexico. Attendees included representatives from EPA, TCEQ, Tamaulipas Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development (SEDUMA), Comisión Internacional de Limites de Agua (CILA), Brownsville Public Utilities Board (BPUB), Attorney General's Environmental Protection Division, Matamoros Water Utilities, and Secretary of State Colonias Director and other border partners.

The meeting included a presentation from the BPUB on their Border 2020 grant for \$25,000 to help fund a Fat, Oil and Grease (FOG) public outreach campaign. The goal of the project is to provide outreach and education to improve water quality by reducing the number of sanitary sewer overflows from commercial and residential customers while increasing environmental awareness of how fat, oil and grease contribute to a potential health hazard if not handled correctly. Activities performed under the grant included:

- Public Outreach initiatives - FOG Best Management Practices (BMP's)
- Workshops/Public Presentations: from February to May 2016, BPUB presented the FOG program to 540 people. From February – May 2016, distributed 1, 771 door-hangers & brochures.
- TV Commercial(s)/Interviews <http://www.rgvproud.com/news/local-news/brownsville-pub-drainage-campaign>
- April - 35 TV Spots (NVEO Brownsville)
- May - 37 TV Spots (NVEO Brownsville)
- May - 42 TV Spots (Telemundo 40)
- June - 1 TV Interview (Univision 48)
- Newspaper/Website <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AL8PFo3SAtc>
- Customer Site Visits

David Negrete from CILA shared information on the Lower Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Water Quality Initiative (LRGWQI). This pilot project will address the problems and concerns in the Lower Rio Bravo / Rio Grande below Falcon Dam to the Gulf of Mexico through binational cooperation on water quality. The objective is to develop a binational watershed-based plan to reduce bacteria levels in the southern stretch of the Rio Grande, other issues like salinity and dissolved oxygen will be also addressed in this initiative. This



Residential FOG Outreach Campaign by Brownsville Public Utilities Board

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Four-State Regional Workgroup Activities Cont'd

initiative will serve as an institutional model to address the additional issues of transboundary water quality in other parts of the Rio Grande. Mr. Negrete also provided an update on the Reynosa, Matamoros, Camargo, Miguel Aleman, Diaz Ordaz, Ciudad Mier y Nueva Ciudad Guerrero wastewater treatment plants and infrastructure projects certified by BECC.

Javier Guerrero and Agosto Sanchez from Texas A &M, shared information on Low Impact Development (LID) Implementation and Education project funded by Border 2020 Program. The goal of this project is promote specific research and educational topics emphasizing how green infrastructure strategies can be utilized to mitigate stormwater runoff, to maximize local stormwater runoff detention at development projects, to minimize localized flooding in urban, rural, and colonia settings, to manage oil & grease and other illicit discharges from residential and commercial businesses using the water quality treatment characteristics of low impact development, to mitigate illegal dumping and stormwater floatables, and their impact on localized flooding and water quality. Mr. Guerrero also discussed several LID projects in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Dr. David Eaton, from UT's LBJ School, presented on efforts to support local stakeholder participation in the Lower Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Water Quality Initiative. These efforts include involving local stakeholders in developing management practices and selecting investments to improve water quality in all three of the bi-national stretches of the river, from: El Paso to Amistad Reservoir; from Amistad Reservoir to Falcon Reservoir; and from Falcon Reservoir to the Gulf of Mexico. The grant was at its beginning stages but Dr. Eaton shared the goals/activities that would be accomplished under the project.

Finally, Claudia Lozano, TCEO, provided copies of the Gulf Task Force's 2-year action plan, water projects only. Currently, there are several water projects that are in progress with eight new projects in the Gulf Task Force Region that were approved at the end of 2015 to receive funding from Border 2020 Program. More information: Maria Sisneros (Sisneros.maria@epa.gov)

EPA REGION 6 Environmental Justice Summit

EPA Region 6 hosted a five-state Environmental Justice Summit on August 9-10, 2016, in Dallas, TX. The summit was the culmination of the state EJ Training Workshops and included sessions on the development and implementation of the EJ Collaborative Action Plans for Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. The summit also highlighted examples of successful multi-stakeholder collaborations to address EJ issues in communities across Region 6, as well as recent federal government initiatives that can support local community efforts to address EJ issues. Nearly 170 people attended the Summit including speakers and EPA support staff, that included Debra Tellez from the El Paso Border Office and who currently serves as the New Mexico EJ State Liaison. Summit participants included grassroots and community leaders, non-profit organizations, academia, industry, local, state,

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EPA REGION 6 Environmental Justice Summit Cont'd

and federal environmental justice partners. Border NGO and ARISE, delivered a presentation focused on the Colonias-Lower Rio Grande Valley Texas Actions/Initiatives that both the Region 6 Superfund, EJ and Border Program have been working on. More information: Debra Tellez (tellez.debra@epa.gov) or Paula Flores-Gregg (flores.paula@epa.gov)



2016 EJ Summit Participants in Dallas, Texas (Photo: [Air Alliance Houston](#))

Emergency Response Sister-City Plan Updates in Four-State Region

On July 13, 2016 City officials from Laredo and Nuevo Laredo met to update the sister-city plan. The cross border contingency plan outlines instances when the City of Laredo Fire and Nuevo Laredo Fire Department will respond to cross-border emergencies and put in place a communication notification system for such events. More information: Maria Sisneros Sisneros.maria@epa.gov



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Emergency Response Sister-City Plan Updates in Four-State Region Cont'd

On September 29, 2016, the Brownsville/Harlingen, Texas – Matamoros/Valle Hermoso, Tamaulipas Cross Border Contingency Plan was signed in Brownsville, Texas. Claudia Lozano of TCEQ played a key role in getting the Plan signed; although the Plan had been funded under a grant of the Border 2012 Program, there was a delay in having the plan officially signed. The plan reinforces the cooperation between the cities to be able to respond more efficiently to hazards and share resources during local binational disasters. More information: Maria Sisneros (Sisneros.maria@epa.gov)



Emergency Response Preparedness Conference for Colonias

The OEJTIA office through both the EJ and Border 2020 Program began working with several non-government organizations in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (RGV) region to assist them with hosting a conference on emergency preparedness and recovery efforts for Colonias. The **RGV Community Emergency Preparedness Conference: Before, During and After** was developed as a first-of-its-kind event that provided colonia residents with hands-on, Spanish-language education about how to prepare for, survive and recover from a disaster. The conference was held on Saturday, August 27 at the Primera Iglesia Bautista de Alamo in Alamo, Texas. In total, 110 colonia residents were able to attend the all day conference. The conference was developed and funded by a coalition of community groups, local elected officials and faith based organizations that include; A Resource In Serving Equality (ARISE), La Unión del Pueblo Entero (LUPE), Texans Recovering Together, El Valle District of the United Methodist Church, First United Methodist Church of Donna, Food Bank of the RGV, Alamo Water Supply Corporation, the Community Development Corporation of Brownsville, Hidalgo County Precinct 2, Rio Delta Engineering, bc Workshop, and the Texas Secretary of State Colonia Program. Maria Sisneros, from the border program, participated on the planning committee for several months leading up to the conference. Paula Flores-Greg, from the EJ Program, assisted the day of the conference. The Border 2020 Program, through the BECC, provided approximately \$4,636 in funding for the conference.

Several valley-wide organizations and agencies held informational 45-minute workshops in the morning, followed by plenary sessions. The workshops covered information from fire prevention to food safety and storage after an emergency. The plenary sessions included a review of the county evacuation plans, a panel on disaster housing, and a family emergency planning session. Workshops were held in Spanish with optional English translation, and takehome materials were provided in

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Emergency Response Preparedness Conference for Colonias Cont'd



Colonia Residents at Fire Safety Workshop

Spanish as well. Due to the success of the conference, the EPA EJ Program along with ARISE and several other steering committee members will be looking to expand and build upon the conference to create a template or model for future conferences, such as this, that can be held in other colonias areas. Paula Flores-Gregg (flores.paula@epa.gov) or Maria Sisneros (Sisneros.maria@epa.gov)

Border Breakfast

The New Mexico Border Health monthly meetings highlighted several of our Border partner's activities during the last few months of 2016. The NMSU Extension, Family and Consumer Services discussed the Health Literacy Action team initiative, at the July 2016 meeting, which is working with patient, provider interaction. They have determined Literacy skills is number one determinant of Health. They conducted health literacy assessment of "at risk" audiences (low income levels, older adults, incarcerated individuals, GED students). The three-year program will provide assistance to medical community with resource development to address the need for patients to read and understand info given to them, calculating prescription dosages, understanding medication levels, and interpreting test results.



The New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute presented at the August 2016 meeting to discuss their study on the Impact of Drought on Household Water

Quality in rural Southern New Mexico completed in June 2015. The study, funded by the New Mexico Department of Health, focused on testing the quality of private well water and impact of five-year consecutive drought on groundwater in the Mimbres Basin, a groundwater aquifer shared by New Mexico and the Mexican state of Chihuahua. The Basin serves as the primary source of household water for residents in NM's Luna County and portions of western Doña Ana and Southern Grant County. It also supplies the Mexican border community of Puerto Palomas. NMDOH and WRRRI concerned with the high percentage of individuals in the Mimbres Basin served by unregulated, private wells, conducted this well water testing project to determine if well owners were unknowingly at risk from elevated concentrations of harmful contaminants in their drinking water. It is estimated 2,910 households

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Border Breakfast Cont'd

obtain their household water from private wells. 143 individual wells samples were collected and tested for arsenic, fluoride, nitrates, uranium, total coliform and E. coli. Of the samples tested, 16 or 11.2% were measured at concentrations that exceeded one or more of the standards for healthy drinking water. Four samples exceeded the standards for two or more contaminants, some as high as four times the maximum concentration level. Project staff provided lab results in Spanish and English and met with well owners to assist the well owner in understanding their probable source of contamination and were instructed on methods of reducing or eliminating the contaminant from their household supplies. The WRRRI researchers concluded that the concentrations of contaminants in groundwater may rise during periods of drought and as the drought advances in the border region, monitoring private domestic water supplies becomes a more relevant exercise to help healthcare workers better identify individuals at risk of drinking water contamination. The complete project results can be found at: <http://border.nm.edu/wellwatersamplingproject>. They announced that additional well monitoring will begin in Hidalgo County.

The Border Environmental Cooperation Commission (BECC) presented at the September 2016 meeting to discuss some of the strategic Initiatives promoting sustainable practices and investment, energy audits and water audits. They identified the lack of attention and strategies for addressing aging infrastructure in the border region, unsustainable rate structures and lack of water storage capacity in some border communities. Doña Ana County Health and Human Services (DACHHS) presented their efforts to streamline crisis response system for mental health patients at the October 2016 meeting. They are identifying places to intercept folks before detention and opportunities for pre-screening to get services (i.e. vets, direct them to appropriate office). DACHHS is emphasizing citation, rather than incarceration and partnering with ambulance service to transport crisis victims in vehicle rather than an ambulance. DACHHS is looking to create assisted outpatient care program and bringing in crisis training for law enforcement and emergency services. More information: Debra Tellez (tellez.debra@epa.gov)



3-State and 4-State Partner Calls

MONTHLY CONFERENCE CALL WITH BORDER PARTNERS: The El Paso Border Team began in 2006 having monthly calls with Border 2020 Federal and State Co-Chair Border staff in order to keep each of the agencies updated on ongoing border meetings and efforts as they relate to the Border Program. The meetings are held every 2nd Tuesday of month with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT in Spanish), New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), the Secretariat of Urban Development and Ecology for state of Chihuahua (SEDUE in Spanish) and Ysleta del Sur Pueblo (YDSP). The conference calls focus on environmental border events in the Texas-New Mexico-Chihuahua (TX-NM-CHIH) region that each agency conducts. As events occur, updates are discussed to better prepare for the event and receive input by the border partners.

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3-State and 4-State Partner Calls Cont'd

In the past months, updates that have been discussed include the Border 2020 2-year workplans for the TX-NM-CHIH Regional Workgroup that focused on projects and actions that were completed or will be completed in 2015 through 2016, as well as, the new priorities for the 2016-2017 2-year workplans. In addition, border projects funded and their status are shared amongst the group, as well as, any activities that took place as part of these projects. Other discussions included taskforce meetings: The Joint Advisory committee (September 2016); Texas-Chihuahua taskforce (July 2016); Amistad, Falcon and Gulf Task Forces (June 2016). Ongoing discussion regarding the PROAIRE, which was signed in September 2016, the air quality management plan for the state of Chihuahua. Partner meetings that have taken place has included the Bi-national Health Council meetings in El Paso, Texas and Presidio, Texas. More information: Maria Dora Vasquez (Vasquez.maria@epa.gov)

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Goal 5: Enhance Compliance Assurance & Environmental Stewardship

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