

WRITTEN TESTIMONY
Of
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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

BEFORE THE
SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL
RESPONSIBILITY

Las Cruces, New Mexico

April 11, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Udall and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Al Armendariz. I am the Regional Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 6 Office in Dallas, Texas. I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the accomplishments of our work along the border. The U.S.-Mexico border is one of the most unique places in the world—not only because of its culture and environment, but also because of the interconnectedness that the two countries share. Air, water, and land pollution have no boundaries; therefore it is critical to address these challenges in a bi-national approach.

EPA has a history of working with Mexico's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) including through the La Paz Agreement. Our work with Mexico has been the commitment of two nations who understand the interconnectedness of our shared border. Most importantly, it is an example of how environmental protection can be achieved by working together as partners. EPA is proud to work with the Government of Mexico through many programs and activities that further achieve EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment, including the U.S. - Mexico Environmental Program: Border 2012, as well as the U.S.-Mexico Border Water Infrastructure Program, which provides funding through the Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) and the Project Development Assistance Program (PDAP). We also look forward to continued collaboration into the future under the new Border 2020 program.

Border 2012 is our current bi-national program through which EPA and SEMARNAT work together with communities, state and local governments, U.S. tribal governments, and indigenous communities on both sides of the border to enhance and protect the environment and human health of border residents. The U.S.-Mexico Border Water Infrastructure Program was established in 1996 to support drinking water and wastewater projects that improve human health and the environment for border residents. These two programs complement each other to protect the environment and human health for border communities.

EPA's US-Mexico Border Water Infrastructure Program has worked closely with both the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) and the North American Development Bank (NADB) since the program's inception in 1996. EPA allocates Border Water Infrastructure Program funding to the BECC to support project planning and design, and to the NADB to finance project construction. These organizations play an important role in assisting EPA to provide drinking and wastewater infrastructure to residents along the border. The experience of the BECC and NADB is essential for seamless development and construction of water infrastructure projects.

EPA also coordinates with Federal, state and local funding partners to facilitate the delivery of often first time drinking water and wastewater services to small communities, while minimizing the administrative burden on them. Funding sources can include the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development (USDA-RD), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), EPA State Revolving Funds (SRFs), the Texas Water Development Board, the Government of Mexico and local communities on both sides of the border. Domestically, EPA routinely coordinates with USDA-RD to fund and implement infrastructure projects.

Through our collaboration EPA has been able to protect water quality by treating sewage at the source in a cost-effective and technically sound way. To date, EPA has invested a total of \$571 million in NADB administered Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) construction funding which has leveraged an additional \$1.1 billion from other federal, state, local, and Mexican organizations. EPA's BEIF has funded ninety-eight projects for construction, benefiting 8.5 million people. Completed projects are treating more than 350 million gallons of wastewater per day. Every U.S.-Mexico Border Water Infrastructure Project, whether located in the U.S. or in Mexico, must demonstrate a human health and/or

environmental benefit. EPA strongly emphasizes the need for projects to demonstrate a clear benefit to the U.S. as a fundamental project selection criterion.

The Border Water Infrastructure Program has provided planning, design and construction assistance to a number of communities in New Mexico through the BECC-administered Project Development Assistance Program (PDAP) and the NADB-administered BEIF. Over \$4 million in PDAP funding has provided assistance to 16 project sponsors to develop environmental studies, preliminary engineering, planning documents and final designs. Projects in Chaparral, San Miguel, Columbus and Mesquite have received PDAP assistance and were able to obtain other sources of funding to implement their water and wastewater infrastructure projects. The BEIF has funded infrastructure projects to construct and rehabilitate water treatment plants within the communities of Anthony, La Union, Salem/Ogaz, Dona Ana County and Lordsburg. Significant progress has been made in providing border communities with essential drinking water and wastewater infrastructure services, however, significant challenges remain. EPA will continue to work with available resources to address the significant unmet infrastructure needs of border communities.

Working in partnership with the Government of Mexico, BECC and NADB, the EPA has been able to collaborate on environmental projects that protect human health and the environment. Together, we have solidified our partnerships through science, by connecting experts from all levels of government. These bi-national efforts with border and tribal governments help to sustain healthy communities by utilizing a bottoms-up approach and by working side-by-side at a grass-roots level. I'd like to spend a moment to highlight some of our border-wide accomplishments of the Border 2012 and Border Water Infrastructure Programs. Our accomplishments are centered on three essential themes; 1) strengthening bi-national state partnerships through collaboration; 2) capacity development; and, 3) developing solutions through partnerships. Some of our accomplishments include:

Strengthening Bi-national State Partnerships

New Mexico-Texas-Chihuahua Region: Removing solid waste through bi-national state-level partnerships: The Border 2012 New Mexico-Texas-Chihuahua regional workgroup has been instrumental in removing nearly 8 million tires from the region since the Border 2012 program was launched. More than 7 million tires came from the Juarez

scrap tire site. These efforts have substantially reduced the community's exposure to mosquito-borne diseases and potential fire and air pollution risks.

California-Baja California Region: Clean-up of hazardous waste through bi-national state-level partnerships: EPA worked with SEMARNAT and Baja California's Secretariat for Environmental Protection (SPA) to remove over 2,000 tons of hazardous waste and safely contain 42,000 tons of contaminated soil, waste, and debris at an abandoned U.S.-owned lead smelter, near Tijuana. As of today, that site has been remediated and revitalized into a new environmental laboratory for testing vehicle air emissions and samples from the air-monitoring network in Baja California.

Capacity development through Technical Assistance

Texas-Coahuila-Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas Region: Reducing the potential for water-borne illness through technical assistance. Via a mutual collaboration with the State of Texas and the City of Pharr, a waste-water collection system was rehabilitated to prevent flows of untreated water to the nearby community.

Arizona-Sonora Region: Capacity development through tri-national tribal partnerships. Through cooperation of the Tohono O'odham Nation Office of Environmental Protection (one of the largest U.S. Tribes along the border), the Border Environment Cooperation Commission and Border 2012, the San Francisquito community was able to work with their tribal affiliates on the Mexican side of the border to access clean drinking water, while using a solar array to power the water conveyance system.

Developing Solutions through Partnerships

New Mexico-Texas-Chihuahua Region: When the U.S.-Mexico Border 2012 program was first launched in 2002, the Paso Del Norte air-shed of Ciudad Juarez, El Paso, and Dona Ana County violated the U.S. air standards for three different pollutants: ozone, carbon monoxide, and coarse particulates. As a result of bi-national cooperation between the U.S. and Mexico, the Paso Del Norte region has seen some of the best air quality improvement in the nation. The area now meets the standards for ozone and carbon monoxide and is near attainment for coarse particulate matter.

Arizona-Sonora Region: EPA worked closely with the Arizona Department of Agriculture and Mexico's Secretary of Agriculture to remove over 200,000 pounds of unused and obsolete agricultural pesticides in agricultural communities in Arizona and Sonora. These obsolete pesticide collection events have greatly reduced exposure to farm workers and their families.

Even though our efforts along the U.S.-Mexico border have contributed towards improving human health and the environment, there is still more work to be done to safeguard the health of border residents and the environment they live in. As the population increases along our shared border, the environmental challenges of air pollution, access to clean and safe water, and proper waste management remain ever present. In order to address these remaining challenges, EPA and SEMARNAT are embarking on a new U.S.-Mexico border program, the "Border 2020" program.

Border 2020 is a continuing effort to build healthy communities along the border by advancing actions and projects that address environmental and human health issues while strengthening bi-national partnerships. We anticipate that our work will involve cleaning the air through anti-idling engine technology, providing safe drinking water through infrastructure, and reducing exposure to hazardous waste and chemicals through awareness and better management practices.

EPA and SEMARNAT are currently negotiating the Border 2020 program; however I would like to point out some key differences between the Border 2012 and Border 2020 programs. Border 2020 has an 8 year implementation horizon. It will include biennial action plans that will establish priority and near-term targets that pay attention to the particular needs of a geographic area, region, or community, and adapt to emerging issues. There are five fundamental strategies being considered that will inform how we will achieve the goals and objectives of the program. These include:

- Climate Change
- Disadvantaged and Underserved Communities
- Children's Health
- Environmental Education

- Strengthening Tribal, State, Federal and International Partnerships

Upon completion of negotiations with our partners in Mexico, the Administration will present and sign the official document at a meeting of the 2012 National Coordinators in August, in Tijuana, Mexico.

In conclusion, EPA's collaboration with the Government of Mexico, specifically through our border programs, has been successful in establishing a strong bi-lateral environmental agenda. However it is our continuing partnership with state and local governments, tribes, and indigenous communities of Mexico, where we have been able to make important impacts toward improving the health of border citizens, and safeguarding the environment in which they live for present and for future generations.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony today and look forward to responding to any questions you may have.