

The TCEQ Border Initiative

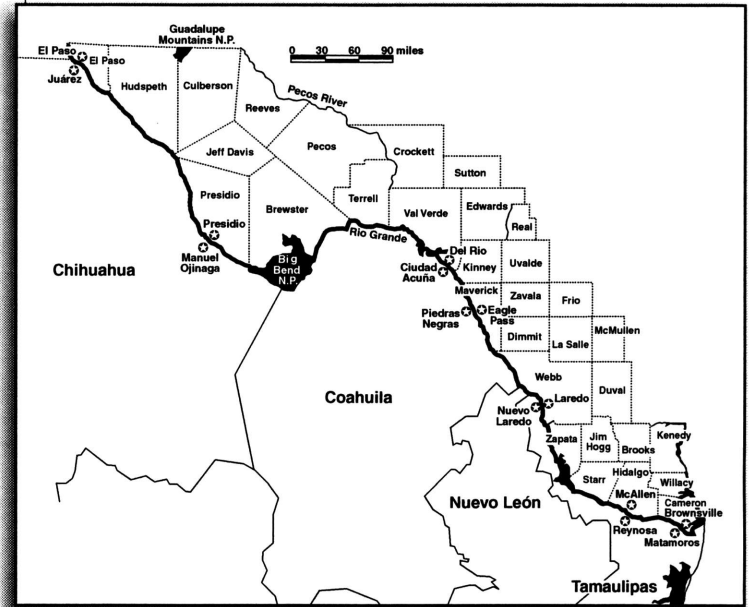
The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has developed a comprehensive, cooperative effort to serve border residents. The TCEQ has individual projects and also works with local, state, and federal stakeholders to maximize efforts to improve the environment of the U.S.-Mexico border region. It is a goal of the TCEQ to collaborate with as many willing partners as possible along the border because the environment knows no border. The initiative strives to increase—in the border region—cooperation and the exchange of knowledge, experience, and technology related to the environment, as well as promote the TCEQ's mission of protection of our state's human and natural resources, consistent with sustainable economic development.

The TCEQ border initiative is led by Commissioner Garcia and coordinated through the Border Affairs Team, under the direction of the executive director. The TCEQ will ensure that border efforts have a measurable environmental benefit.

Local

- The TCEQ has three regional border offices (Harlingen, Laredo, and El Paso). Regional-office personnel conduct regular investigations, respond to complaints, and serve as first responders for releases of hazardous materials, among other duties.
 - The Rio Grande watermaster is located in the Harlingen Office with a satellite office in Eagle Pass. The watermaster ensures deliveries of water to water-rights holders and enforces withdrawals.
 - Small Business and Local Government Assistance personnel in the three regional offices are there solely to assist with compliance in these areas.
- Central-office personnel in Austin also offer support.
 - For instance, the Office of Public Assistance answers questions about pending TCEQ permits, explains the permitting process and opportunities for **public participation**, and **conducts public meetings** on permit applications around the state.
 - Austin personnel in the Chief Engineer's Office and Field Operations Support Division work on El Paso air quality issues to help that area achieve and maintain attainment status with federal standards.
- The agency has more than 80 full-time employees dedicated to border work, including regional and Border Affairs personnel.

Texas Border with Mexican States



State

The agency collaborates on border environmental goals with various agencies. Unless otherwise indicated, these are legislatively mandated.

- **Commissioner Rubinstein represents the TCEQ on the Texas-Mexico Strategic Investment Commission, an interagency group chaired by the Texas border commerce coordinator.** Among its multiple charges, the commission must “identify areas of environmental protection that need to be addressed cooperatively between Texas and the Mexican states.”
- **The border affairs manager serves on the Interagency Work Group on Border Issues.** The TCEQ supplies information on the agency's impact on border communities for use in developing public policy.
- **In addition, the colonias coordinator from the agency's Border Affairs program represents the TCEQ in the Colonias Coordination Work Group.** This interagency effort is led by the colonias coordinator in the Office of the Secretary of State and meets quarterly to review individual projects in Texas that ensure delivery of water, wastewater, drainage, and paved roads to colonia residents.
- **The agency helps develop special border reports, in collaboration with other agencies.** These include



updates on agency activities for the annual Texas border-commerce coordinator's report and reports on colonia activities, such as the continuing reports required by Senate Bill 99, 80th regular session, on tracking the progress of colonia projects funded by the State of Texas.

- **TCEQ personnel meet regularly with personnel from other agencies as needed to ensure completion of border-related projects and activities.** For example, the TCEQ is an integral stakeholder within the newly created Texas Water Infrastructure Coordination Committee.

National and International

The TCEQ works in national and international arenas to accomplish environmental-protection goals. The agency works with other U.S. and Mexican states, federal agencies in both countries, and binational institutions created under environmental side agreements to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Partnerships with Other States

- **Border Governors Conference.** Through the Border Governors Conference the TCEQ sits on the Environment and Water Work Tables with members of all 10 states to develop annual declarations. Commissioners Garcia and Rubinstein represent the TCEQ at the Environment and Water Work Tables, respectively.
- **State-to-State Strategic Environmental Plans.** The TCEQ has developed strategic environmental plans with Texas' four neighboring Mexican states (Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, and Chihuahua) and is now updating these plans. The plan developed with Nuevo León has been used extensively in the past two years, and a new agreement was signed with Nuevo León on May 5, 2010. The plans promote technical exchange between the TCEQ and the counterpart environmental agencies of the other states, as well as mutually beneficial cooperative work.

Collaboration with NAFTA Environmental Agencies

- **North American Commission on Environmental Cooperation (CEC).** The TCEQ monitors the activities of the CEC, which was created under the trilateral (Canada-U.S.-Mexico) environmental side agreement to NAFTA. Under the CEC charter, each nation can have two committees advising its respective cabinet-level environmental minister regarding CEC implementation. Commissioner Rubinstein serves on the Governmental Advisory Committee and, with other members, makes consensus recommendations to the EPA Administrator.
- **The Border Environment Cooperation Commission and the North American Development Bank.** The TCEQ works closely with these two agencies, created under a U.S.-Mexico environmental side agreement to NAFTA, to ensure construction of environmental

infrastructure in the border region with Mexico and to protect the environment and public health.

Partnerships with Local, State, Federal, and Binational Stakeholders

- **Border 2012.** The Border 2012 binational environmental-protection program is the means by which the U.S. and Mexico implement the La Paz Agreement for the protection of the U.S.-Mexico border environment. The TCEQ works with local individuals and organizations (including border residents, local communities, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations [NGOs]) and local, state, and federal agencies from both sides of the border on common environmental goals. The U.S. EPA and its Mexican counterpart, SEMARNAT, lead Border 2012.

Border 2012 is a multimedia program (including air, water, and waste) requiring participation from agency personnel in six binational work groups, chaired by U.S. and Mexico federal representatives. Agency personnel also participate in two regional work groups in Texas and neighboring states—the Tri-State and Four-State; both work groups consist of geographic task forces chaired by local elected officials from both countries, with a federal and state co-chair from each country. Commissioner Garcia is the Texas co-chair for the Tri-State and Four-State work groups.

- **Good Neighbor Environmental Board.** A representative of the State of Texas sits on the GNEB, an advisory board to the U.S. President and Congress on environmental infrastructure along the U.S.-Mexico border. The GNEB is charged with producing an annual report for its clients. The TCEQ Border Affairs manager is the current Texas GNEB representative.
- **Joint Air Quality Advisory Committee.** The JAC is a binational group created under the La Paz Agreement. Composed of 22 members—half from each nation in the Paso del Norte airshed—the group makes recommendations to the La Paz Air Work Group on ways to improve air quality in the airshed, as one nation alone cannot resolve air quality problems. Since its creation in 1996 and due in large part to implemented recommendations—such as delivery of oxygenated fuels to Ciudad Juárez to reduce carbon monoxide in the winter—the number of times the national carbon monoxide standard was exceeded has dropped from 30 per year to one or two. In El Paso, initiatives such as the vehicle inspection and maintenance program have resulted in no monitored violations since 2001, and a federal redesignation to attainment status for carbon monoxide. Additionally, in October 2008, the 10-year maintenance plan for reductions of carbon monoxide emissions, as developed by the TCEQ, was approved.
- **Lower Rio Grande Watershed Initiative.** The agency is continuing efforts that began in 2008, with Mexican state and federal agencies, the EPA, and the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) to develop a watershed initiative to restore and protect water quality in the Rio Grande downstream of Falcon

Dam. One objective of the plan will be determining the maximum amount of pollutants of human origin that can be discharged to the Lower Rio Grande while still maintaining its designated uses.

- **Sister-City Planning.** Agency personnel, in both the regional offices and in Border Affairs, support sister cities (cities located on both sides of the border) in their local planning efforts. For example, in 2009, personnel in the Harlingen regional office worked with sister cities in the Lower Río Bravo–Rio Grande Valley to update their joint contingency plan, adding seven smaller, neighboring cities on both sides of the border. The plan was enhanced to include response to “all hazards,” such as hurricanes and floods, not just chemical releases. In February of 2011, in the spirit of binational cooperation and because of a close rapport through meetings and exercises, the City of Brownsville gave support to Matamoros during a landfill fire.

2011 Action Plan

The following actions will be carried out by the TCEQ in 2011 as part of the agency’s Border Initiative. This list is not comprehensive.

Water

- **Assist in Developing a Biological Assessment of the Río Conchos Basin.** Personnel from the TCEQ’s Surface Water Quality Monitoring program are participating in planning and supplying technical assistance on a binational multistate study involving state and federal agencies, universities, and NGOs. The goal is to complete a biological assessment of the Río Conchos basin in Mexico. Several meetings were held in 2009 during which participants discussed an index of biological integrity (IBI) and defined the geographical range of the assessment (the Río Conchos and the Rio Grande from El Paso to the Falcon Reservoir).
- **Assist Water Systems in the Border Area with Current or Pending Enforcement Actions.** Personnel from the TCEQ Office of Water will perform financial, managerial, and technical assessments for local water systems that are under enforcement. In addition, the TCEQ will either perform consolidation analysis or produce compliance-feasibility studies, as requested.
- **Conduct Training for Border Municipalities, Districts, and Investor-Owned Utilities.** The border area presents several unique challenges for water systems of all sizes, and the TCEQ Water Supply Division conducts regular workshops for local water utilities.
- **Define “Extraordinary Drought.”** In 2007 the TCEQ, through the Border Governors Conference Water Table, worked to include a declaration that the Water Table would develop a definition of “extraordinary drought” for the Rio Grande Basin only. The lack of a definition of this term contributed to delays in settling Mexico’s Rio Grande water debt of 1.5 million acre-feet to the U.S. The TCEQ developed a draft definition and presented it at a March 2009 drought conference to

several Mexican states of the BGC Water Table and, in September 2009, to all the Mexican states of the Water Table. Mexican states are considering the proposal and the TCEQ will follow up with Mexican states in 2011 at the Border Governors’ Conference Meeting in Baja California. A final draft will be submitted to appropriate federal agencies in both countries for approval.

- **Develop a Binational Watershed Initiative for the Lower Rio Grande.** The TCEQ will work with local, state, and federal agencies to collect data and develop a framework for a binational watershed initiative to address indicator bacteria in the TCEQ’s Rio Grande Segment 2302, the 231-mile-long reach of the Rio Grande below Falcon Reservoir. These efforts will include discussions with agencies from both the U.S. and Mexico. Multiple meetings have been held along the border from El Paso to Brownsville, in addition to important meetings in Austin on May 5, 2010, and San Antonio on March 17–18, 2011, to discuss the issues with stakeholders and policy makers from both nations.
- **Environmental Flows for the Rio Grande, Rio Grande Estuary, and Lower Laguna Madre.** Senate Bill 3, 80th Texas Legislature, sets out a new regulatory approach for ensuring surface water to meet environmental-flow needs. The TCEQ is to develop basin-specific recommendations for environmental-flow standards to be used in deciding on new (and amended) water-right applications and to establish an amount of unappropriated water, if available, to be set aside for the environment. The TCEQ will lead the process through the Basin and Bay Area Stakeholders Committee. The rules for the three basins and bay system are to be completed by September 1, 2013. The first meeting was held January 25, 2011, in Weslaco.
- **Participate in Upper Rio Grande Salinity Management.** Salinity management is under way in southern New Mexico and west Texas along the Rio Grande; the TCEQ participates as part of a coalition of local water utilities, irrigation districts, university research organizations, and state and federal agencies. Agency efforts include five continuous water quality monitoring stations on the upper Rio Grande and six continuous water quality monitors on tributaries to the Rio Grande that affect the salinity in Amistad Reservoir. Several meetings were held in 2009 to review deliverables for Phase I. A scope of work for Phase II has been finalized and work has begun to evaluate six specific areas of elevated salinity for targeted salinity-control projects.
- **Rio Grande Restoration.** The TCEQ was invited to participate in this initiative of federal and state agencies and NGOs from both sides of the border. Multiple offices of the agency are involved in this project, which aims to explore using flow-release schedules on the Rio Grande to maintain channel capacity, minimize flooding, and benefit aquatic habitat. In December 2009 TCEQ managers participated in a field study of the Río Conchos and its two main reservoirs in the state of Chihuahua. The group continues to evaluate ways to provide additional flows to the Rio Grande

for environmental purposes. Several members of this group have been nominated to participate in the stakeholder group for Senate Bill 3 (80th Texas Legislature), Texas Environmental Flows (see above, "Environmental Flows for the Rio Grande").

Air

- **Continue Binational Air Quality Monitoring in Ciudad Juárez.** The Ciudad Juárez air quality monitoring network is integrated into TCEQ's reporting system for air quality data (Leading Environmental Analysis and Data System, or LEADS). After discussion in the JAC to expand the Juárez network, given the growth of that city's urban footprint and the desire for additional monitoring, in summer 2010 Ciudad Juárez deployed several sampling devices for PM₁₀ (particulate matter smaller than 10 microns, or fine dust) to new regions of the city. The expansion of the Juárez network provides critical sampling data for the southwest and southeast parts of the city.
- **Continue West Texas Visibility Monitoring.** The TCEQ currently operates the West Texas Visibility Monitoring Network, a network of high-resolution digital cameras used to help identify and track natural events (such as dust storms) in the El Paso region and to track regional haze at Guadalupe and Big Bend national parks, both identified as federal Class I Areas. The TCEQ and the EPA are sharing the cost of a project to update and expand the network in fiscal 2011.
- **Continue Work on the Joint Advisory Committee for Air Quality Improvement.** The TCEQ serves as U.S. state co-chair and a staff member performs administrative support for quarterly meetings of the JAC. On November 4, 2010, the JAC celebrated its 50th meeting and 15 years of operation. Meeting minutes, agendas, and presentations are maintained at the JAC website, <www.jac-ccc.org>.
- **Deploy an Additional Camera in Big Bend National Park.** TCEQ Region 6 currently is preparing to deploy an additional high-resolution digital camera at the park to augment the West Texas Visibility Monitoring Network.
- **Develop Emissions Inventory with Ciudad Juárez.** In spring 2010 the EPA awarded funds to the TCEQ for special projects for the improvement of air quality in El Paso del Norte. The Border Affairs staff is working closely with the TCEQ Chief Engineer's Office and contracting with the University of Texas—Center for Energy and Environmental Resources (UT-CEER) to collaborate with officials from Mexico and develop an emissions inventory of Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua.
- **Implement the 2011 Ozone Standard.** The new federal ozone standard could have an impact on the El Paso area, which is part of the multistate and tri-national Paso del Norte airshed, and Brewster County, site of Big Bend National Park. On January 19, 2010, the EPA (in the Federal Register) proposed strengthening the primary eight-hour ozone standard to 0.060–0.070 parts per million. The EPA also proposed

to establish a separate cumulative, seasonal secondary standard within a range of 7 to 15 ppm-hours. The EPA has rescheduled promulgation of the final ozone standards to no later than July 29, 2011. The TCEQ will continue to work with the local organizations in El Paso this year to take actions that could bring the monitored values below the new standard before the EPA makes final designations.

- **Maintain Good Air Quality in El Paso.** El Paso continues to maintain ambient air levels below the current National Ambient Air Quality Standards for three pollutants—ozone, carbon monoxide, and particulate matter. However, standards for these three pollutants are being reassessed by the EPA in 2011. Continued monitoring and best management practices by the community are necessary. In the next few years, the TCEQ will work with local governments to update the emissions inventory in the Texas part of the basin. Recently, funds have also been appropriated to update the emissions inventories in the New Mexico and Mexico parts of the air basin.
- **Purchase and Placement of a New Auto GC Air Monitor in El Paso.** Levering funds awarded to the TCEQ from the EPA, the Border Affairs staff—together with the Chief Engineer's Office and Field Operations Support Division—will work to purchase and site a second Auto GC air monitor in El Paso via a contract with UT-CEER to more broadly characterize the specific pollutants that contribute to high-ozone days, and their sources.
- **Rider 8 Funding for Air Quality Planning.** The Texas Legislature appropriated funds through Rider 8 of the 2009 appropriations bill to the TCEQ for air quality planning to reduce ozone in local areas around the state, including El Paso. Beginning in fall of 2009, the Air Quality Planning Division began working with the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to develop and implement a grant worth approximately \$800,000 and associated work plan for this purpose. In fall 2010, the TCEQ and the MPO signed a contract and began work on the projects.

Waste

- **Improve the Management of Scrap Tires.** Unauthorized disposal of scrap tires is a priority issue on the border and poses a significant threat to human health and air quality (in the event of a fire). The TCEQ will work with federal, state, and local stakeholders in the border region, both in the U.S. and Mexico, to develop and implement strategies to track and properly dispose of scrap tires. One such forum in which TCEQ is an active participant is the U.S.-Mexico Tire Initiative Collaborative Effort.

Other

- **Continue State-to-State Environmental Programs.** Agency personnel, especially in Border Affairs, will work with counterparts from Mexican state agencies on mutual issues to enhance and protect our shared

border environment. The agency is updating these plans as necessary to accommodate ongoing needs, both of the TCEQ and its counterpart agencies in the four neighboring Mexican states. On May 4, 2010, Commissioner Buddy Garcia and Secretary Fernando Gutierrez of the Nuevo León Ministry of Sustainable Development signed the Nuevo León–Texas Memorandum of Cooperation, 2010–2015. Border Affairs personnel are in active conversations with the Tamaulipas Ministry of Urban Development and Environment (SEDUMA) on a Memorandum of Cooperation.

- **Continue Coordinated Emergency-Response Measures with the International Boundary and Water Commission.** The TCEQ interacts routinely with the U.S. section of the IBWC to coordinate emergency management response and discuss border safety. The TCEQ has also incorporated the IBWC into the state's emergency management as a counterpart in preparing for floods and other natural disasters along the Rio Grande. The two agencies will continue to support each other and partner on important matters.
- **Develop a Proposed Annex VI (Enforcement) to the La Paz Agreement.** The La Paz Agreement for the protection of the U.S.–Mexico environment does not explicitly reference environmental enforcement or compliance assistance. The proposed Annex VI would include these critical subjects and would be developed with the EPA and its Mexican counterpart, SEMARNAT, as well as other stakeholders.
- **Expand the Efforts of the Compliance Assistance, Environmental Stewardship, and Cooperative Enforcement (CAESCE) Task Force in the Border 2012 Three-State Regional Work Group.** The TCEQ Region 6 (El Paso) small business and local government assistance compliance specialist currently serves as co-leader for the Border 2012 CAESCETask Force, which examines ways to promote environmental compliance and enforcement in the Paso del Norte region, especially with respect to movement of hazardous waste across the international boundary.
- **Expand Environmental Summits.** The TCEQ, especially through its Small Business and Environmental Assistance Division, gives logistical and other support to an annual environmental summit in El Paso. On October 1, 2010, about 400 people attended the El Paso summit, which included elected officials, industry representatives, and local residents. With the success of the El Paso summits, held since 2000, the agency worked successfully with legislators and local officials to expand them to the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Laredo. On September 24 and October 14, 2010, respectively, the first environmental summits were held in those areas. Border environmental summits are scheduled in 2011: October 7 in El Paso, October 20 in Laredo, and October 28 in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (McAllen).
- **Focus on Border Issues at the 2011 Environmental Trade Fair.** On May 4, 2011, as part of the TCEQ Environmental Trade Fair in Austin, Border Affairs organizes a special track on environmental quality

along the Texas portion of the border with Mexico. Topics include compliance assistance and enforcement on the border as compared to the rest of the state, Mexico's response to flooding in Monterrey after hurricane Alex, the TCEQ's role in the binational response to flooding of the Rio Grande after hurricane Alex, and a focus on air quality in Juárez–El Paso.

- **Support Local Stakeholders through the Border 2012 Program.** Border Affairs personnel will support local stakeholders, including NGOs, in El Paso, the Del Rio to Zapata area, and the Lower Rio Grande Valley and assist them in applying for environmental-management grants to meet their needs. The Border Affairs staff is also working with stakeholders and the EPA to develop the next-generation program.
- **Work with Stakeholders on Cross-Border Emergency-Response Planning.** The TCEQ will work with local stakeholders to create regional emergency-response plans from a binational perspective. Staffers will work with fire departments and protección civil (local and state emergency-response agencies in Mexico) to update and further develop sister-city contingency plans for the groups of sister cities along the international border Texas shares with the four Mexican states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, and Chihuahua. Improvements to these plans often include “all hazards,” not just responses to chemical releases. The TCEQ serves as lead for regular meetings, knowledge exchanges, and exercises where emergency officials from both countries respond to an incident in real time.

2009–11 Accomplishments

- **Assist in Reintroducing the Silvery Minnow.** The TCEQ has been a member of a stakeholder group, chaired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to reintroduce the Rio Grande silvery minnow as an experimental, nonessential population in the Rio Grande in the Big Bend area. The minnow had disappeared from the Rio Grande below El Paso. The USFWS reintroduced 445,000 silvery minnows in the Big Bend reach of the Rio Grande on December 16, 2008 and another 509,000 in October 2009 and plans to reintroduce more minnows in the future. The TCEQ continues to support the reintroduction of the minnow by providing real-time data from two continuous water quality monitors in the Big Bend reach of the Rio Grande. Data can be accessed at <www.tceq.state.tx.us/goto/wq_stations>.
- **Assist Water Systems with Current or Pending Enforcement Actions.** In 2010–11, the Office of Water, through its contract for financial, managerial, and technical assistance, consulted with over 20 troubled water and wastewater systems in the border area. The on-site assistance varied from consolidation assessment to assistance with compliance and rate setting.
- **Conduct Energy-Efficiency Workshops.** The TCEQ contracted with the Center for Energy and Environmental Resources at UT-Austin for an energy-efficiency

project for local governments and industry. First, CEER held workshops in Laredo and Brownsville for local governments and school districts (with total attendance of about 120), and followed up with assessments of specific buildings belonging to six of the workshop attendees. Then, during summer 2009, CEER held a workshop in Brownsville for industry on efficient air compression and performed assessments at seven industrial sites.

- **Conduct Oil and Gas Pollution Prevention Workshops.** In April 2009 the TCEQ held a free one-day workshop in Hebbronville for oil and gas production facilities to demonstrate the benefits of, and incentives for, preventing pollution. The workshop offered strategies on how to improve efficiency while decreasing or eliminating pollution, such as volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions, to the atmosphere.
- **Conduct Aquatic-Life Monitoring of the Upper Pecos River.** The aquatic-life use for the Upper Pecos River is impaired for 24-hour dissolved oxygen per the 2010 303(d) list. TCEQ surface water quality monitoring personnel collected water and biological samples in November 2010 and January 2011 at four sites. The data will be analyzed and will further characterize the impairment.
- **Conduct Outdoor-Burning Workshops.** The TCEQ Small Business and Environmental Assistance Division and regional-office personnel successfully coordinated workshops that focused on compliance with the state's outdoor-burning rules with an emphasis on developing and adopting local ordinances. The workshops were held in Harlingen and Edinburg in April 2009, El Paso and Alpine in July 2009, and Marfa and again in El Paso in April 2010. Workshop participants included local government officials, firefighters, and code-enforcement officers; continuing-education units were issued to certified code-enforcement officers.
- **Conduct Binational Training for Border Municipalities on Wastewater Pretreatment.** TCEQ Border Affairs personnel conducted technical workshops with municipal officials in Reynosa and Matamoros in late 2008 and in Laredo in January and March 2009. The workshops focused on the technical aspects of developing a program on fats, oils, and grease through local ordinances. Personnel from the TCEQ's Office of Water and Border Affairs worked closely with the EPA to conduct workshops on wastewater pretreatment in El Paso and McAllen on February 8 and 10, 2011, respectively. With water utilities on both sides of the border as the primary audience, the workshops focused on the latest regulatory developments, industrial pretreatment, and programs addressing fats, oils, and grease. The workshops were well-received and well-attended with more than 35 systems from south and far west Texas represented, and a combined total attendance of 140, including over 25 operators and management from utilities in Mexico.
- **Construct Water Quality Wetlands in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.** The TCEQ Office of Water worked

closely with the cities of La Feria, San Juan, and San Benito to design and construct wetlands for management of storm water runoff—designed to further improve the quality of water in area arroyos. The project in La Feria was successfully completed in July 2009; the projects in San Benito and San Juan are under construction.

- **Continue Binational Air Quality Monitoring in Ciudad Juárez.** The TCEQ was instrumental in ensuring that data reporting from Ciudad Juárez air monitors continued after an unexpected change in monitor management in February 2009 from the City of El Paso to the Ciudad Juárez Ecology Department.
- **Continue Participation on the Good Neighbor Environmental Board.** The TCEQ representative on the GNEB the water section for the 13th annual GNEB report, *A Blueprint for Action on the U.S.-Mexico Border*. The report was released on June 17, 2010, in Washington and was accepted on behalf of the president by Council on Environmental Quality chair Nancy Sutley.
- **Continue State-to-State Environmental Programs.** In July and August 2009 the TCEQ organized several technical exchanges and training events with its counterpart agency in Nuevo León. The two agencies worked together on environmental law enforcement and air quality issues including visible emissions quantification, monitoring for particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns, and calculating emission inventories of on-road vehicles. Through a contract with the UT-Austin LBJ School of Public Affairs, the TCEQ is in discussions with counterpart agencies in Tamaulipas, Coahuila, and Chihuahua on ways to enhance cross-border cooperation and improve the environment along the border. On May 4, 2010, TCEQ Commissioner Garcia signed a new agreement with Secretary of Sustainable Development Fernando Gutiérrez of Nuevo León, and on May 27, 2010, Commissioner Garcia met with Secretary Gutiérrez and Governor Medina of Nuevo León to discuss actions the TCEQ and the Secretariat of Sustainable Development (SDS) can implement.
- **Deploy Continuous Water Quality Monitors in the Rio Grande.** The Water Quality Planning and Field Operations Support divisions of the agency maintain a network of eight continuous water quality monitoring stations downstream of Falcon Dam. The monitors measure the concentration of total dissolved solids (TDS—salts in this case) in agricultural return flows. These monitors supply data to Texas and Mexico to facilitate management of TDS concentrations of the lower Rio Grande, allowing for action if levels are so elevated that saline waters could damage agricultural production—a major economic activity in the area. The real-time data are viewable online at <www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/swqm_data>. Extreme and prolonged flooding in the lower Rio Grande in July and August 2010 affected the monitoring sites. Six stations have been restored and are reporting data.
- **Develop Eco-Vida Public-Service Announcements and Outreach in the Tri-State Area.** TCEQ personnel

from the El Paso regional office and Border Affairs team worked with NGOs to conduct monthly stakeholder meetings, host a website, and hold short TV spots that present environmentally friendly options for everyday activities.

- **Focus on Border Issues at the TCEQ Environmental Trade Fair.** In May 2010 during the annual TCEQ Environmental Trade Fair, Texas' premier environmental education forum, Border Affairs personnel conducted a two day special focus on environmental quality along the Texas border with Mexico. Presentations focused on scrap tire management, water quality of the Rio Grande, and compliance assistance and enforcement on the Texas border. Speakers included Commissioner Edward Drusina of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States Section, Secretary Gutiérrez of the Nuevo León SDS, and Mario López, Director of Water Quality for Northern Mexico, Mexico National Water Commission (known as CONAGUA in Mexico).
- **Identify the Best SmartWay Technologies for Drayage Trucks.** The SmartWay Transport Partnership is a voluntary collaboration between the U.S. EPA and the freight industry. Through a contract with the Texas Transportation Institute, with support from the EPA, the TCEQ funded a study that characterized typical drayage-truck drive cycles, tested SmartWay technologies for emission reductions, and performed cost-benefit analyses. Among the SmartWay technologies analyzed were fuel additives, ultralight trailers, and "eco-driving" techniques. The study was completed in August 2009; the final report with results and recommendations was presented on April 15, 2010 at the 48th annual JAC meeting. On July 1, 2010, the JAC passed a joint resolution to encourage "eco-driving" techniques and to train drayage truck drivers to implement the practice. The report is available online at <tti.tamu.edu/about_tti/international/cross_border/truck_emissions.htm>
- **Improve the Management of Scrap Tires.** On August 6, 2009, in McAllen, the TCEQ partnered with the SDS of Nuevo León and EPA Region 6 to hold a binational workshop on municipal scrap-tire management. Forty-six attended the workshop, including representatives from six Texas cities and counties and seven Mexican cities, scrap-tire program leads from New Mexico and Texas, officials from the Mexican federal environmental agency in regional offices as well as Mexico City, the acting deputy regional administrator and several other personnel from EPA Region 6, and academics from both sides of the border. The workshop examined successful and not-so-successful municipal scrap-tire programs, the high costs of tire fires, and further development of demand-side markets that are absorbing many, but not all, scrap tires.
- **Launch a Community Road Show in the El Paso Region.** During spring 2010, the TCEQ El Paso regional office put on a traveling open house to address local and rural environmental concerns. Personnel traveled to Alpine, Marfa, Van Horn, Presidio, and

Jeff Davis County to address complaints and explain the agency's role in the community.

- **Organize a Biosolids-Management Workshop.** On July 17, 2009, TCEQ Border Affairs conducted a workshop in McAllen that offered case studies of what several cities are doing to generate end-use products from biosolid wastes, including wastewater sludge, yard wastes, and food wastes. Personnel from wastewater utilities and public-works departments from cities on both sides of the border in the lower Rio Grande Valley, Laredo, and Nuevo Laredo heard a keynote address by one of the world's leading experts (from UT-Austin) on biosolids. More than 45 attended.
- **Organize and Participate in Conferences on Border Security.** On February 16, 2010, agency personnel worked closely with the Texas Division of Emergency Management to organize a workshop on border security and emergency response. The Border Affairs manager also presented at a conference on February 14, 2011 at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, Impacts of Security on U.S.-Mexico Border.
- **Participate in the Colonias Workgroup and Economically Distressed Areas Program Task Force.** The agency's Colonias Coordinator represented the TCEQ at regular meetings to implement Senate Bill 99 (79th legislative session), regarding tracking of state-funded projects that benefit colonias.
- **Partner on a Binational Emergency-Preparedness Workshop and Mock Drill in Rio Grande Valley.** On May 26 and 27, 2010, more than 80 stakeholders representing the three levels of government in the U.S. and Mexico met for two days at Rancho Viejo, Texas, for the third consecutive year to hold a "knowledge exchange" and plan for an upcoming real-time exercise. TCEQ personnel played a key role in organizing the event and bringing together local and state representatives from both countries. During the knowledge exchange each authority presented its available resources and discussed how it could support the others. The group also reviewed the GIS risk map, which shows locations and types of hazardous materials. TCEQ personnel continue to give integral assistance on joint emergency exercises, including the "Mega-Drill" held April 1, 2011 at the Veterans' International Bridge between Brownsville and Matamoros.
- **Workshops on Petroleum Storage Tanks for the Regulated Community.** In November 2010, in Harlingen and El Paso, the Small Business and Local Government Assistance section of the TCEQ held free workshops where all owners and operators of petroleum storage tanks and others could learn about state and federal PST regulations. The speakers explained the general rules and requirements for PSTs and how to use the TCEQ's latest compliance tool, the Petroleum Storage Tank Super Guide: A Comprehensive Guide to Compliance in Texas (available upon request as agency publication RG-475).
- **Provide Training in Basic Environmental Criminal-Law Enforcement.** The TCEQ's Special Investigations

Section, along with the Southern Environmental Enforcement Network, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Environmental Crimes Unit, and the EPA Criminal Investigation Division, led a three-day training on investigation and prosecution of environmental crimes in Laredo in June 2009. The TCEQ invited and hosted eight federal and state enforcement officials from Tamaulipas and Nuevo León, Mexico.

- **Provide Clean School Bus Grants.** The Texas Clean School Bus program awards grants to school districts and charter schools for the purchase and installation of technology to reduce diesel emissions and reduce onboard exposure for schoolchildren and bus drivers. In fiscal 2010 and the first quarter of fiscal 2011, using federal funds, including leveraging funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the program awarded nearly \$300,000 to improve the

onboard air quality for 53 school buses in four school districts along the Texas border with Mexico.

- **Response and Coordination during the July 2010 Flooding of the Rio Grande.** As the liaisons between the IBWC and the Texas Division of Emergency Management, TCEQ personnel were instrumental in coordinating efforts to control the flooding, acting as the eyes and ears of the IBWC by patrolling floodgate levees saturated by the floodwater and notifying the IBWC of any cracks or boils discovered—along 160 miles of the Rio Grande from Falcon Dam downstream to Brownsville and 270 miles of floodway levees in Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy counties. In addition, specialized teams of TCEQ employees conducted 75 water and wastewater inspections, three landfill inspections, and inspected 2,799 irrigation and flood-control features including lateral gates, levees, temporary pump, and others in the affected counties.

For more information:

Contact TCEQ Border Affairs at 512-239-3500 or by e-mail <ba@tceq.texas.gov>.

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