

The TCEQ Border Initiative

13TH EDITION, MAY 2015

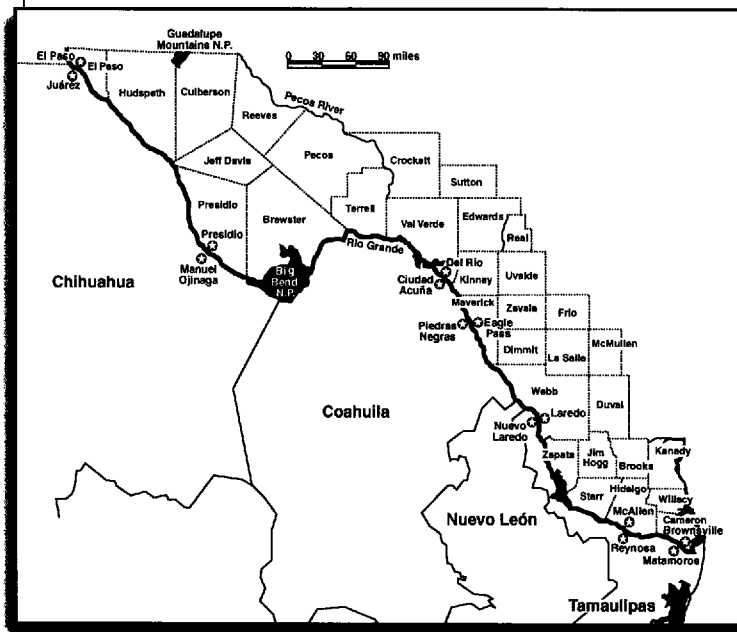
The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has developed a comprehensive, cooperative initiative to serve border residents. The TCEQ leads individual projects and works with local, state, and federal stakeholders to maximize efforts to improve the environment of the U.S.-Mexico border region. Since environmental issues do not stop at international borders, the TCEQ collaborates with as many willing partners as possible along the border. The initiative strives to increase cooperation and the exchange of knowledge, experience, and technology as it relates to the environment in the border region, as well as promote the TCEQ's mission to protect Texas' public health and natural resources consistent with sustainable economic development.

The TCEQ Border Initiative is led by Chairman Bryan W. Shaw, Ph.D., P.E., 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 Focus

- 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 program is based in the Harlingen office, with personnel in the Laredo office and a satellite office in Eagle Pass. The watermaster ensures deliveries of water to water-right holders and enforces withdrawals.
 - Small Business and Local Government Assistance personnel in the three regional offices provide confidential assistance on air, water, and waste regulations to small businesses and small local governments, face to face and through the toll-free hotline at 800-447-2827.
- Central-office personnel in Austin also offer support.
 - For instance, personnel from the Public Education Program answer questions about pending TCEQ permits and explain the permitting process and opportunities for public participation. The Office of the Chief Clerk conducts public meetings on permit applications around the state.
 - Austin personnel in the Office of Air and Office of Compliance and Enforcement work on El Paso air quality issues to help that area achieve and maintain attainment status with federal

Texas Border with Mexican States



standards. The Monitoring Division operates and maintains monitoring stations along the Upper, Middle, and Lower Rio Grande to measure specific air quality parameters that vary by location. Data from these monitors are available to the public on the TCEQ website, at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/monitors.

- The agency has 85 full-time employees dedicated to border work, including regional and Border Affairs personnel.

State Focus

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

- Chairman Bryan W. Shaw, Ph.D., P.E., represents the TCEQ on the Texas-Mexico Strategic Investment Commission, an interagency group chaired by the Texas border-commerce coordinator. Among its many 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 Inter-agency Work Group on Border Issues of the Office



of the Texas Secretary of State. The TCEQ supplies information on the agency's impact on border communities for use in developing public policy.

- In addition, the agency's colonias coordinator, who is also the Border Affairs manager, 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, stormwater 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 activities related to colonias, 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 in the Texas Water Infrastructure Coordination Committee (TWICC). TWICC holds workshops around the state, including the border.

National and International Focus

The TCEQ works nationally and internationally 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 participates in the Sustainability Work Table with representatives of all 10 U.S.-Mexico border states to develop annual declarations.
- **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 has been updating these plans. The plans foster technical exchange and mutually beneficial cooperative work between the TCEQ and counterpart environmental agencies of the other states.

The plan developed with Nuevo León has been applied extensively in the past three years on issues ranging from air quality modeling to use of tire-derived aggregate in road construction. In addition, Tamaulipas and Texas have worked on vehicle emission testing and scrap-tire management. In 2013 TCEQ commissioners and Coahuila's secretary of environment signed a joint memorandum of cooperation during the agency's Environmental

Trade Fair and Conference. Since then, Texas and Coahuila officials have coordinated on scrap tire management, curbing illegal dumping of demolition and construction debris, and improving water quality of urban streams.

Collaboration with NAFTA Environmental Agencies

- **North American Commission on Environmental Cooperation (CEC).** The TCEQ tracks and participates in relevant 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.
- **Border Environment Cooperation Commission and 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 and to protect the environment and public health.

Since 2006, the two institutions have had a common board of directors, and, in the fall of 2014, the board voted to fully integrate the two institutions. The board will send the proposal to the two governments for their consideration and, potentially, legislative processes.

Partnerships with Local, State, Federal, and Binational Stakeholders

- **Border 2020.** The Border 2020 binational environmental program is the implementation plan of the La Paz Agreement for the protection of the U.S.-Mexico border environment. TCEQ management and personnel were deeply involved in developing the goals and strategies of Border 2020, building on the predecessor program, Border 2012.

Through Border 2020, the TCEQ works with local individuals and organizations (including border residents, local community leaders, 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 2020, with close participation by TCEQ personnel in five binational policy forums, chaired by U.S. and Mexico federal representatives. Agency personnel also participate in two regional work groups, the Tri-State (Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua) and Four-State (Texas, Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, and Coahuila); TCEQ Chairman Bryan W. Shaw, Ph.D., P.E., is the Texas co-chair for both of these regional work groups.

- **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 Border 2020 Air Policy Forum on ways to improve air quality in the airshed, which is shared by both nations and divided by the international border.

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 airshed exceeded the Mexican national carbon monoxide standard 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, along with federal redesignation to attainment status for carbon monoxide.

- **Good Neighbor Environmental Board.** Chairman Bryan W. Shaw, Ph.D., P.E., was reappointed in 2015 to represent the State of Texas on the GNEB, an advisory board to the U.S. President and Congress on environmental and infrastructure issues along the U.S.-Mexico border. The GNEB is charged with producing an annual report for its clients.
- **Lower Rio Grande Water Quality Initiative.** The agency continues to work with Mexican state and federal agencies, the U.S. EPA, and the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) to restore and protect water quality in the Rio Grande (Río Bravo) downstream of Falcon Dam. The objectives of the initiative are to characterize the state of the river, develop a strategic plan to improve environmental conditions, and implement a monitoring plan to document progress.
- **Sister-City Planning.** Agency personnel from both the regional offices and Border Affairs support sister cities (adjacent cities separated by the border) in their local planning. Illustrating the collaborative nature of binational work, projects will involve local and state participation, often receiving funds from a federal source such as the Border 2020 program, and support from the Northern Command of the U.S. Department of Defense. Based on input from local experts and city officials, the plans are being enhanced to include response to “all hazards,” such as hurricanes and floods, not just chemical releases.

Accomplishments, 2013-15

The TCEQ completed the following projects between January 2013 and April 2015. The list represents several categories: water quality, air quality, emergency management, and general (multimedia). This list is not comprehensive.

Water Quality Assisting Compliance

- **Assisted Water Systems with Current or Pending Enforcement Actions.** From January 2013 to April

2015, the Office of Water, through its contract for financial, managerial, and technical assistance, consulted with 78 water and wastewater systems in the border area. The on-site assistance varied from consolidation assessment to assistance with compliance issues, drought, and funding.

- **Assisted Water Systems in Response to Drought.** In 2013 and 2014 the TCEQ met in the Lower Rio Grande Valley with irrigation districts and public water systems and hosted a workshop on funding and assistance with member authorities from TWICC, including the Texas Water Development Board, Border Environment Cooperation Commission, Communities Unlimited, Inc., and Texas Rural Water Association. TCEQ personnel continue to assist utilities proactively with required drought contingency plans, water conservation, and other methods for protecting public water supplies.

Monitoring Water Quality

- **Conducted Aquatic-Life Monitoring of the Upper Pecos River.** The Pecos River is an important source of surface water in arid west Texas. The aquatic-life use for the Upper Pecos River (Segment 2311) is impaired for 24-hour dissolved oxygen and is on the 2012 303(d) list (a report of impaired water bodies prepared by the TCEQ biennially, as required by the federal Clean Water Act). The draft 2014 303(d) list also identifies the Upper Pecos River as impaired due to depressed dissolved oxygen.

Data obtained from the aquatic-life monitoring effort were evaluated as part of the 2014 revision to the Texas Surface Water Quality Standards (TSWQS). The revised TSWQS were approved by the TCEQ commission in February 2014 and are still under review by the EPA. The draft 2014 303(d) list, also known as the Texas Integrated Report, is available on the TCEQ website.

- **Installed Continuous Water Quality Monitoring on the Pecos River.** Continuous water quality monitoring stations have been installed in Texas and near Red Bluff, New Mexico, to monitor conditions and changes in water quality to support the Upper Rio Grande Salinity Project and the implementation of the Pecos River Watershed Protection Plan. The real-time data are viewable online at <www.texaswaterdata.org>.

Protecting Water Quality

- **Developed a Binational Lower Rio Grande Water Quality Initiative.** In 2013, the TCEQ worked with U.S. federal and Mexican state and federal agencies to develop a framework for a binational plan to address water quality problems in the Rio Grande (Río Bravo) below Falcon Reservoir. These efforts culminated in a binational agreement (also

called Terms of Reference) for collaboration among agencies from the U.S. and Mexico. The agreement, which establishes the framework for cooperation and specifies the goals of the initiative, was signed by both countries in September of 2013.

Training: In support of the Initiative, the U.S. EPA and the Border Environment Cooperation Commission sponsored training for the project partners on water quality monitoring, water quality modeling, and quality-assurance procedures. The University of Texas and the TCEQ hosted this training jointly. In addition to its work with U.S. federal and Mexican state and federal agencies, the TCEQ, along with the Texas General Land Office, collaborated with the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas to develop a local stakeholder-participation plan. This plan included interviews of local residents and gathering important descriptive information that will help implementation of the binational agreement.

Sampling: As part of the binational agreement, the partners collected data to develop and calibrate a binational water quality model for the river segment. Refinements to the model were completed in the summer of 2014. The model will be instrumental in guiding binational decision-making to address water quality issues and concerns. Additional water quality sampling occurred in early 2015. (See "Action Plan, 2015"—fourth bullet under "Protecting Surface Water Quality.")

- **Implemented Low-Impact Development Projects in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.** The TCEQ Office of Water gave technical and financial assistance to Texas A&M University at Kingsville, in partnership with several cities in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, to construct more than 25 LID projects using best management practices in the area, monitor the effectiveness of the BMPs, and conduct education and outreach to further improve the quality of surface water in the area. The BMPs include wetlands, rain-water-harvesting systems, pervious parking lots, pervious walking trails, green roofs, bioswales, and rain gardens. Seventeen BMPs have been completed as of April 2015. The BMPs are being constructed in strategic locations that are visible to the public and local decision makers to encourage incorporation of these practices in future development projects.

Managing Water Availability

- **Hosted Water Awareness Summits in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.** Together with State Representative Eddie Lucio III, the TCEQ organized a recurring water summit to raise awareness about the origin of public water in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and how to address future challenges. The summits held in February 2013 and March and December 2014 have been effective in engaging stakeholders, fostering relationships, and developing a regional perspective.

- **Supported the City of Laredo in Organizing a Pair of Binational Conferences on Water Conservation.** The TCEQ worked closely with the EPA and Laredo Utilities Department on two water-conservation conferences, held in March 2013 (100 participants) and February 2015 (200 participants), both in Laredo. The participants, including local, state, and federal officials from the U.S. and Mexico, shared information on water conservation measures related to crop irrigation, the impact of drought on local communities, and incentive programs for water systems.
- **Facilitated the Establishment of Environmental-Flow Standards for the Rio Grande (Río Bravo), Rio Grande Estuary, and Lower Laguna Madre.** Senate Bill 3 (80th Texas Legislature) set out a new regulatory approach to establishing rules for environmental-flow standards for Texas' rivers and bays. In February 2014, the TCEQ adopted basin-specific environmental flow standards for the Rio Grande to be applied to water-right applications for new water. For more information see <www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/rioflowreport> (PDF file).

Air Quality

- **Provided Clean School Bus Grants.** The Texas Clean School Bus program reimburses school districts and charter schools for the installation of retrofit technology to reduce diesel emissions. The program directly benefits the health of school-children by reducing particulate matter and other pollutant concentrations in and around the school bus cabin. In fiscal 2014 and 2015, the program invested \$1.5 million in state and federal funds for the improvement of onboard air quality for 117 school buses along the Texas border with Mexico. From the beginning of the program in fiscal 2008 through fiscal 2015, the TCEQ has invested \$5.4 million in state and federal funds to retrofit 819 buses in 24 school districts in border counties.
- **Purchased, Installed, and Operated a New Auto Gas-Chromatograph Air Monitor in El Paso.** With a 36 percent funding contribution from the EPA, the TCEQ purchased, installed, and operated a second Auto GC air monitor in El Paso from August 2011 through December 2013. The new data helped to characterize the specific pollutants and sources that can contribute to high-ozone days on both sides of the border.

Modeling and Analyzing Air Quality

- **Analyzed Select Emission Sources in Ciudad Juárez to Complement a Broader Emissions Inventory.** After consulting with local officials on both sides of the border, the TCEQ identified areas of interest that the standard emissions inventory data does not address. The TCEQ worked with the EPA and the University of Texas at El Paso on a one-time

special project for a targeted analysis of select emission sources, including (1) unpaved roads, (2) cement plants and quarries, (3) gasoline fueling stations, and (4) automotive paint and body shops. The parties completed the project in August 2013 and later presented the results to the Joint Advisory Committee on the Improvement of Air Quality in the binational airshed (see "Action Plan, 2015," second bullet under "Air Quality Planning"). The final report is available here, under studies by the TCEQ: <www.pdnaq.org/Publications.htm>

- **Developed an Emissions-Estimation Model for Cross-Border Vehicle Activity at El Paso–Juárez Ports of Entry.** Vehicle traffic at border crossings contributes to total on-road mobile-source emissions in border cities—and there was no methodology to estimate this impact. The TCEQ contracted with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute to develop a robust estimation methodology to allow analysis of cross-border vehicle activity and accurate calculations of the potential effect of control strategies. The institute constructed the tool to facilitate modeling at other inland ports along the entire length of the U.S.-Mexico border, especially Laredo–Nuevo Laredo, which is the inland port in the United States with the highest commercial volume. The project was completed in August 2013.
- **Developed an Emissions Inventory for Ciudad Juárez.** Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, shares the binational Paso del Norte airshed with El Paso. Following a project in 2011 that generated an emissions inventory for biogenic, area, and mobile sources in Juárez, in 2013 the TCEQ again shared costs with the EPA to contract with the Center for Energy and Environmental Resources at the University of Texas to collaborate with officials from Mexico and generate the final part of the inventory—point sources. The new emissions inventory, combined with that of El Paso and Doña Ana County, New Mexico, will help both countries model air quality in the airshed, home to an estimated 2.1 million people (2010 census data).

Fostering Energy Efficiency for Improved Air Quality

- **Supported Energy Efficiency in Local Governments and Irrigation Districts along the Border.** Leveraging state funds and federal funds from the EPA, the TCEQ contracted with the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin to set up and administer a one-time competitive grants program for energy-efficiency retrofits in local governments and irrigation districts. Six local authorities were awarded grants and the retrofits were completed in August 2013. Investments in energy efficiency are investments in air quality.
- **Led Conferences on Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency.** In spring 2015, the TCEQ Border Affairs

program spearheaded two conferences in the Lower Rio Grande Valley on Property Assessed Clean Energy <www.keepingpaceintexas.org/> and energy efficiency upgrades for independent school districts.

Waste Management

- **Improved Scrap-Tire Management in the Border Region through Education and Cleanup Events.** As part of a four-pronged approach to improving scrap-tire management in the border region, the TCEQ focused on market development, education, fair and consistent enforcement, and remediation of existing tire piles.

In April 2013, the TCEQ joined resources with Nuevo León and the EPA to host a binational workshop in San Antonio on tire management. The event involved leaders from the three levels of government (including mayors of border cities), private consultants, experts, and academics.

In March 2014, the TCEQ spearheaded a group including the State of Texas Alliance for Recycling, the EPA, and the Rubber Manufacturers Association to hold a two-day workshop in El Paso on scrap-tire management. A follow-up to the event held in San Antonio, the workshop employed the "Future Search" methodology, a way to achieve consensus among stakeholders with differing goals. Participants included local, state, and federal government officials from both sides of the border as well as NGOs and private industry, in order to fully represent the tire-management community.

Over several weekends during spring 2014 and spring 2015, the TCEQ collaborated with the EPA and local governments to hold scrap-tire collections, also known as "tire amnesty days," in Hidalgo County and rural areas of El Paso County.

Emergency Management and Other Projects

Emergency Management and Preparedness

- **Supported Binational Technical Training on Hazardous-Waste Management and Emergency Response.** In 2013, TCEQ personnel from the Harlingen, Laredo, and El Paso offices worked closely with the EPA, the U.S. Northern Command, and counterparts in Mexico to transfer emergency-response equipment, enhance contingency plans, and train emergency responders from both sides of the border.

Other: General Projects

The following projects are broader, or more general, in scope, addressing more than one category or "medium" (air, water, or waste), and often embracing a collaborative approach.

- **Continued State-to-State Environmental Programs.** The TCEQ signed comprehensive state-to-state agreements with the environmental secretaries of Nuevo León and Tamaulipas in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

In May 2013, the three TCEQ commissioners and executive management met with Eglantina Canales, Secretary of Environment of Coahuila, to sign a memorandum of cooperation. The group developed a two-year work plan and has since worked together on disposal of construction and demolition debris, scrap-tire management, and water quality. See the TCEQ's YouTube channel for a video of the signing ceremony: <www.youtube.com/user/TCEQNews>.

- **Focused on Border Issues at the TCEQ Environmental Trade Fair.** During the TCEQ Environmental Trade Fair in May 2014, Border Affairs organized a full day of presentations on important environmental quality issues along the Texas border with Mexico. Topics included Mexico's energy reform and opportunities for Texas' economy, environmental enforcement in the border region, an overview of the Rio Grande watermaster program, and a binational research project by the LBJ School of Public Affairs on water quality of the lower Rio Grande (Río Bravo). More than 300 people attended the various panels.
- **Participated in the Colonias Work Group and the Economically Distressed Areas Program Task Force.** The agency's colonias coordinator represented the TCEQ at regular meetings to implement Senate Bill 99 (80th legislative session), on tracking of state-funded projects that provide basic services for colonias. The TCEQ leads meetings on specific colonia-related issues along the U.S.-Mexico border and in Nueces County and actively participates in resolving issues related to water and wastewater in colonias through quarterly meetings led by the colonias coordinator of the Secretary of State's Office.
- **Continued Education, Investigations, and Compliance Assistance Related to Oil and Gas Activities in the Eagle Ford.** The Eagle Ford Shale is one of the largest domestic crude-oil and natural-gas developments in more than 40 years. Roughly 50 miles wide and 400 miles long, the Eagle Ford spreads across Texas from the Mexican border toward Brazos County, covering all or parts of 24 Texas counties.

Multiple offices of the TCEQ have been active in working with local governments, regulated entities, and other interested parties. The TCEQ developed and distributed regulatory information, guidance documents, e-mail notifications, and Web pages. TCEQ staff regularly presented on oil and gas topics in half a dozen forums.
- **Participated on the Good Neighbor Environmental Board.** In May 2014, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy named TCEQ Chairman Bryan W. Shaw, Ph.D., P.E., to the GNEB; Chairman Shaw was reappointed in 2015. The TCEQ drafted portions of the 2014 report to the president and the U.S. Congress. The 16th GNEB report, *Ecological Restoration in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region*, is available online at <www2.epa.gov/faca/gneb>.

Action Plan, 2015

The following projects or programs will be carried out by the TCEQ in 2015 as part of the agency's Border Initiative. This list is not comprehensive.

Water Quality, Availability, and Emergency Management Protecting Surface Water Quality

- **Characterize Bacteria in the Brownsville-Resaca Watershed.** The Brownsville-Resaca watershed is the area between the Rio Grande watershed and the Arroyo Colorado watershed. The TCEQ is supporting the Texas Water Resources Institute financially and technically in its collection of data to assess the sources of bacterial impairments and concerns about nutrients and dissolved oxygen in the watershed. The project will also engage stakeholders through the formation of a Watershed Partnership. This group will decide on the next steps for addressing bacteria issues within the watershed. The current project will be completed by December 2016.
- **Collaborate with Coahuila on Restoration of the Arroyo Las Vacas.** The Coahuila Secretariat of Environment is leading a collaborative project to survey, sample, and restore the Arroyo Las Vacas, an urban stream in Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila, and a named tributary to the Rio Grande (Río Bravo). The TCEQ is assisting with quality assurance documents, sharing Texas' water quality standards, and conducting a technical exchange in Austin with students from the LBJ School of Public Affairs and the Technological Institute of Ciudad Acuña.
- **Develop a Watershed-Protection Plan for the Arroyo Colorado.** The Arroyo Colorado is impaired because of bacteria in the upstream portions and the tidal areas. Periods of low dissolved oxygen also occur in the tidal areas. Since 2007, the TCEQ Office of Water has provided technical and financial assistance to support the watershed-protection plan (WPP) for the Arroyo Colorado <www.arroyocolorado.org>, a road map for water quality. The Arroyo Colorado Partnership, administered by the Texas Water Resources Institute, coordinates the WPP and facilitates stakeholder participation. In summer 2015 the partnership plans to present to stakeholders a water quality modeling project that characterizes the dissolved-oxygen dynamics of the tidal segment and bacteria inputs. An updated WPP is scheduled for completion in early 2016.
- **Continue the Binational Lower Rio Grande Water Quality Initiative.** The partners will continue to collect water quality data to develop and calibrate the binational water quality model of the Lower Rio Grande (Río Bravo) below Falcon Reservoir.

Two binational monitoring events and a technical meeting on modeling are scheduled in fiscal 2015. The binational sampling and technical meetings

are crucial to the development of the model, which will be instrumental in guiding binational decision-making to address water quality issues and concerns.

- **Participate in Upper Rio Grande Salinity Management.** The salinity-management project is under way in southern New Mexico and far 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 stations for continuous water quality monitoring on the upper Rio Grande and tributaries that affect the salinity in Amistad Reservoir. The TCEQ will deploy an additional continuous water quality monitoring station on the Devils River. The real-time data are viewable online at <www.texaswaterdata.org>.

Protecting Public Drinking Water

- **Host the Annual Public Drinking Water Conference.** This free two-day conference provides tools and information related to operating a public drinking-water system or water utility in Texas. It will offer specific guidance on operating a surface water-sourced drinking-water plant. Such plants are in the majority along the Rio Grande, and are more complex to operate. The conference will also include a TWICC presentation and workshop to offer one-on-one funding and other assistance. The conference will take place August 11–12, 2015, in Austin.

Managing Water Availability

- **Define “Extraordinary Drought.”** The TCEQ developed a draft definition of “extraordinary drought” for the Rio Grande Basin and presented it at a March 2009 drought conference to several Mexican states on the Border Governors Conference Water Table and, in September 2009, to all the Mexican states on the Water Table. The lack of a definition of this term contributed to delays in settling Mexico’s Rio Grande (Río Bravo) water debt of 1.5 million acre-feet to the U.S. a decade ago and is still a concern, as Mexico falls behind on its current debt. Requests to the IBWC, U.S. Section, for current data from Mexico have not been answered. Mexican states have received the proposal and the TCEQ continues to work with them. Once they have reached agreement, a final draft will be submitted to appropriate federal agencies in both countries for approval.

Supporting Emergency Water Management

- **Serve on a Binational Data and Technical Support Committee to Enhance Emergency Response to Changing Conditions of the Rio Grande (Río Bravo).** In close coordination with the National Weather Service, the U.S. IBWC, and their counterparts in Mexico, the TCEQ will work to (1) inventory existing data, (2) identify gaps in the data, and (3) implement an improved protocol for binational data exchange

for daily operations. The binational group will meet regularly to further develop capacity to respond to emergency events that may affect the Rio Grande Basin, such as floods, drought, heavy rain, hurricanes, water shortages, and other types of disasters.

Air Quality

Monitoring Air Quality

- **Continue Air Quality Monitoring along the U.S.-Mexico Border.** The TCEQ will continue to collect and report real-time air quality measurements at various locations along the U.S.-Mexico border from Brownsville to Paso del Norte (the El Paso–Juárez airshed) and provide air quality forecasts to the public.

Daily air quality forecasts for El Paso, Laredo, and the Rio Grande Valley are available at <www.tceq.state.tx.us/goto/airtoday>. A Texas map with particulate-matter monitors and current levels is available at <www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/pm2-5>.

- **Enhance West Texas Visibility Monitoring.** The TCEQ currently operates the West Texas Visibility Monitoring Network, a network of high-resolution digital cameras used to identify and track natural events such as dust storms in the El Paso region. From 2011 through 2014, the TCEQ and the EPA shared the cost of a project to update and expand the network to include more monitoring sites, update old servers, and enhance the website image display and archival access to images.
- **Improve Wind-Profiler Data in El Paso.** A radar wind profiler detects wind speed and direction at various elevations above ground. The data are vital to understanding air-pollutant behavior. A new project that began in summer 2014 will modify and upgrade an existing radar wind profiler in El Paso and move the instrument to a new site to avoid recent disturbances to data reliability. This project is scheduled to be completed by August 2015.

Air Quality Planning

- **Generate Emissions Profile for Cross-Border Transit Buses.** In fiscal 2014 and 2015, the TCEQ will contract with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute to generate border-specific drive cycles for cross-border transit buses at El Paso–Ciudad Juárez ports of entry. The TCEQ will analyze the data following federal emissions models to develop a more refined on-road mobile emissions inventory. This project is scheduled to be completed by August 2015.
- **Continue Work on the Joint Advisory Committee for Air Quality Improvement.** The TCEQ serves as U.S. state cochair of the JAC, and Border Affairs personnel give administrative support to its meetings three times a year. The JAC began in 1996 and celebrated its 63rd meeting in May 2015. At that meeting and previous meetings, the EPA has led discussions on reorganizing the JAC to eliminate

federal chairmanship in favor of local leadership. The next meeting is planned for September 2015.

- **Administer Rider 8 Funding for Air Quality Planning.** The Texas Legislature appropriated funds through Rider 8 of the fiscal 2014–15 appropriations bill to the TCEQ for air quality planning. Collaborative work between the TCEQ and local programs will maintain compliance with the ozone standard in near-nonattainment areas, including El Paso.

The TCEQ and El Paso's Metropolitan Planning Organization signed a Rider 8 contract and are working closely on the projects during the fiscal 2014–15 biennium. The Legislative appropriation for the fiscal 2016–17 biennium will be called Rider 7.

- **Implement the 2008 Ozone Standard.** On May 21, 2012, the EPA published in the *Federal Register* final designations for the 2008 eight-hour ozone standard of 0.075 parts per million. As of March 2015, the preliminary eight-hour ozone design value for 2015 for El Paso is 0.064 ppm, below the current standard. The EPA published the 2015 proposed ozone standard in December 2014, with a 90-day comment period, and expects to finalize the standard by October 2015. The TCEQ will continue to work with local organizations in El Paso to maintain the monitored ozone values below the latest standard.
- **Maintain Good Air Quality in El Paso.** Ambient air levels in El Paso remain below the current National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone and carbon monoxide, and control measures have been updated to improve particulate-matter levels within the city. Enhanced monitoring and best management practices by the community are necessary to attain, and remain in attainment of, the current standards and to continue improving air quality to meet future standards. The TCEQ will continue to work with local governments to update the emissions inventory in the Texas part of the basin.
- **Quantify Long-Haul Mexican Diesel Traffic between Laredo and San Antonio.** Mobile diesel emissions are expected to be an increasing contribution to the emissions inventory of the Eagle Ford and San Antonio areas. The TCEQ is managing a project with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute to survey current volume and anticipate increases of long-haul Mexican diesel traffic on the IH 35 corridor between Laredo and San Antonio.
- **Improve the Characterization of Ozone Formation in the Paso del Norte Airshed.** The TCEQ is working with the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) to calculate the photolysis-rate coefficients based on real-time data to improve understanding of ozone formation in El Paso. The project includes the purchase of an actinic flux spectrometer, data collection, simulation, and analysis of transport of ozone and precursors across the international border. The TCEQ and UTEP started the project in December 2014 and will finish by August 2015.

Waste Management

- **Advance Sustainable Management of Scrap Tires along the Border.** Unauthorized disposal of scrap tires is a priority issue on the border, posing a significant threat to human health and air quality (such as in a fire). In 2015, the TCEQ will work with federal, state, and local stakeholders in the border region, both in the U.S. and Mexico, to improve sustainable tire management. With the aforementioned partners, the TCEQ will address the problem of illegal dumping in four main ways: educational outreach to tire generators and the public, market development, fair and consistent enforcement, and cleanup of legacy piles. One such forum in which the TCEQ participates actively is the newly created Paso del Norte Tire Advisory Committee.

Emergency Management, Compliance, and Other

Emergency Management and Preparedness

- **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. Personnel will work with fire departments and *protección civil* (local and state emergency-management agencies in Mexico) to update and further develop 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 leads regular meetings, knowledge exchanges, and exercises where emergency officials from both countries respond to a simulated emergency in real time.

Compliance Assistance and Environmental Enforcement

- **Assist Water Systems in the Border Area.** The border area presents several unique challenges for public drinking-water systems of all sizes, including the high number of systems that rely on surface water as their primary source, a more complex treatment process than for groundwater. Personnel or contractors from the TCEQ Office of Water will perform financial, managerial, and technical assistance and assessments for local water systems. In addition, the TCEQ will perform consolidation assessments and assistance for public water systems interested in regional projects or restructuring, as requested. The Office of Water will continue to work with TWICC to offer assistance to water and wastewater systems for funding, through meetings and workshops.
- **Expand the Efforts of the Compliance Assistance, Environmental Stewardship, and Cooperative**

Enforcement (CAESCE) Task Force in the Border 2020 Three-State Regional Work Group. The TCEQ Region 6 (El Paso) compliance specialist for small business and local government assistance currently serves as U.S. coleader for the Border 2020 CAESCE Task Force, which examines ways to promote environmental compliance and enforcement in the Paso del Norte region, especially with respect to trans-boundary movement of hazardous waste. The cross-border flow of used and scrap tires is also a priority topic.

Other: General Projects

The following projects are broader, or more general, in scope, addressing more than one category or "medium" (air, water, or waste), and often embracing a collaborative approach.

- **Continue State-to-State Environmental Programs.** Agency personnel, especially in Border Affairs, will work with counterparts from Mexican state agencies on mutual issues with the aim of enhancing and protecting 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.
- **Continue Outreach Efforts on Oil and Gas Topics in the Eagle Ford Shale.** TCEQ experts will continue to participate in and lead various educational and outreach opportunities related to responsible oil and gas development in the Eagle Ford Shale formation.
- **Support Border Environmental Summits.** The TCEQ, through its Environmental Assistance Division and border regional offices, provides logistical and other support to annual environmental summits

in El Paso, Laredo, and the Rio Grande Valley. In 2014, 1,040 people attended the three summits, including elected officials, industry representatives, and local residents. The 2015 summits will be held on October 8 in Laredo, on October 23 in Harlingen, and in late September in El Paso.

- **Support Local Stakeholders through the Border 2020 Program.** Border Affairs personnel will support local stakeholders, including residents, academia, NGOs, and local and state governments, and assist them in applying for environmental-management grants to meet their needs. Border Affairs will lend its expertise and give logistic support to the program, fostering collaboration, communication, and protection of the border environment. Border Affairs personnel worked closely with border stakeholders and the EPA to develop Border 2020, building on the success of Border 2012.
- **Produce a Session on Border Topics at the TCEQ Environmental Trade Fair.** During Texas' Environmental Trade Fair in May 2015, Border Affairs will organize a full day of presentations on important topics related to environmental quality along the Texas border with Mexico. Topics will include Mexico's energy reform; environmental enforcement in the border region; restoration of the Arroyo Las Vacas in Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila, presented by the Coahuila Secretary of Environment; and environmental protection on tribal lands presented by the environmental director of the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo near El Paso.

In conjunction with the Trade Fair, the TCEQ will host a delegation of students from the Technological Institute of Ciudad Acuña and Coahuila officials for a two-day technical exchange on water quality.

For more information:

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

How is our customer service?

Fill out our online customer-satisfaction survey at
<www.tceq.texas.gov/customerurvey>.

